

REALITY AND ILLUSION IN THE NOVELS OF

WILHELM RAABE

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## SUMMARY

Section One This Section opens with a short historical survey of what previous scholarship has revealed with regard to Raabe's preoccupation with questions of reality and illusion, and attempts to show that, several excellent specialised studies notwithstanding, there still remain substantial areas which have until now been subjected to little or no serious examination; no broadly-based study of the issues involved has as yet appeared.

The main aims of the present study are then set out, as follows: to isolate the central elements in Raabe's attitude to and portrayal of the possibilities and limitations of human perception; to examine the relationship of these separate elements and to establish what underlying patterns, if any, are involved; and to make some contribution towards an assessment of the significance of this aspect for Raabe's work as a whole and towards a consideration of Raabe's position in literary and historical terms.

The methods and structure of the present study are outlined briefly at the end of this Section.

Section Two Under the general heading: "Escape from reality", this Section deals with what are arguably the four most crucial areas of illusion, self-deception and misunderstanding depicted in Raabe's mature fiction. It considers the varying methods adopted by a large number of Raabe's characters as a means to escape from the harsh realities of the outside world or to diminish the pressure which it constantly exerts upon them. The Section opens with an examination of Raabe's attitude to conventional social

values and traditions, and to the unquestioning adherence which, in his view, they enjoy in the community at large. On the basis of a detailed analysis of the novels Abu Telfan (1867) and Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895), together with a brief survey of the major representative novels of the intervening period, an attempt is made to demonstrate both the constant and the changing factors in Raabe's social attitude. Within this context two main conclusions emerge: on the one hand Raabe deliberately - and, with the passing of the years, more and more consciously - distances himself from the communities he portrays and the values they represent; on the other hand he seems reluctant to discard these values entirely and accords them, even in a predominantly negative context, some degree of validity. The "escape into conformity" is not rejected out of hand. It is suggested that this apparent ambivalence reflects a wider tension, informing Raabe's work as a whole, between the ideal and the practicable, the desirable and the possible.

There then follows an examination of Raabe's attitude to the imaginative outsider, the individual who rejects the commonly accepted standards of society and their claim to reflect basic truths about life and humanity, and who goes his own way either in terms of social intercourse or of personal morality. This Chapter, entitled: "Escape into fantasy", is concerned mainly with an analysis of the novel Wunnigel (1876), supported by a more general consideration of the manner in which this aspect of Raabe's writing emerges in other, later works, notably Deutscher Adel (1877) and Die Akten des Vogelsangs. The evidence of these representative novels points to three main conclusions. Firstly, it suggests that Raabe's concern does not lie solely with the faults and short-



comings of the social unit but extends beyond this to encompass different segments of reality and to take account of different perspectives on life. Secondly, it shows that Raabe's attitude to the imaginative outsider is essentially ambivalent. In both Wunnigel and Deutscher Adel Raabe mutes the criticism directed at the extreme representatives of the claims of the imagination by the creation in each case of a more moderate, more acceptable figure who successfully fuses in his own personality the demands of external reality with the temptations of the subjective inner world of fantasy. In so doing, Raabe seems to be searching for the possibility of some form of compromise between the claims of external reality and those of the imagination. Within the context of this observation, however, it is important to note that towards the end of Raabe's life a change in emphasis occurs: the stark presentation of the figure of Velten Andres (Die Akten des Vogelsangs) and the pre-eminence he enjoys over his mother (a character in some ways reminiscent of the "moderate" representatives of the imagination encountered in the earlier novels) suggest that Raabe is now ready to come to terms more openly and painfully with the inevitable insecurity and vulnerability of the imaginative outsider. Finally it is suggested that, taken together, the evidence of this and the previous Chapter illustrates a continuing distrust of extremes and a strong desire for moderation. (This last point is dealt with in some detail towards the end of Section II).

Attention is subsequently focussed on the third main area of illusion central in Raabe's mature fiction: the attempt to create or re-create the ideal or remembered world of childhood purity and simplicity. Raabe's view of this undeniably common human

attitude (termed in this study the "escape into memory"), is illustrated in particular through the portrayal of two figures from novels of his middle and old age - Fritz Langreuter (Alte Nester, 1879) and Fritz Feyerabend (Altershausen, 1902). In both of these novels (which, from the point of view of Raabe's attitude to the past, are representative of his mature writing as a whole) Raabe draws attention to the perils as well as to the values of the past and insists that whatever attractions our memories of the past may hold, their reality can neither be maintained in a magical continuum, nor can it be artificially recreated. Here too, however, a distinct shift of emphasis, similar in character to that already noted within the context of the "escape into fantasy", is clearly evident: whereas in a number of novels from his mature period Raabe does not apply a standard of ruthless realism but seeks rather to accommodate his urge to insight with his sense of human limitation and weakness (examples include Alte Nester, Pfisters Mühle, 1884, and Die Akten des Vogelsangs), his approach in Altershausen, his last connected prose work, is quite different. Here the ambiguities and qualifications of the earlier works are done away with and Raabe, at the last moment, finds the strength to accept reality, however unpleasant its manifestations, and to reject absolutely the validity of any form of escape into the past.

The fourth and final individual category of illusion examined in this Section is that centred round the temptation to see a shortcut to the goal of vision and self-realisation in a radical simplification of life's complexities and in a reduction of its dilemmas to one or two simple factors. This temptation, which Raabe explored again and again throughout the whole span of his

literary career, is illustrated through the medium of Drei Federn (1865, on Raabe's own admission his first really independent work) and, once more, of Die Akten des Vogelsangs, the indispensable lynch-pin of any broadly-based Raabe-criticism. Despite considerable differences in outlook and presentation (operating generally in favour of the Akten), Raabe's approach is essentially unchanged. The sources of the "escape into extremism" are shown to be identical to those of the three forms of escape already dealt with: they are born of a feeling of inadequacy, sometimes even of helplessness, and of an overwhelming desire to escape from the three-dimensional complexities of real life into a comforting two-dimensional realm of ordered simplicity. This particular form of escape, which in a certain sense transcends all the others, is unique in that, alone of all the different modes of behaviour explored in this Section, it attracts Raabe's almost unmitigated censure; the distrust of extremes and the desire for moderation so obvious in Raabe's analysis of the three preceding forms of escape is, of course, particularly evident in this context.

The concluding Chapter of this Section serves to draw together into a more coherent pattern those strands of evidence which have so far been considered mainly in isolation. An attempt is made to show how Raabe relates each of his recurring preoccupations (notably the concern with social values and with the influence of the past) to the others and how, consequently, they are to be seen not as absolute concepts existing without reference to other criteria but rather as independent elements of a complex whole whose constituent parts cannot ultimately be disentangled. On the basis of this approach two differing but complementary conclusions are offered. On the one hand, Raabe seems to regard



all the modes of behaviour discussed earlier in this Section (each of which he shows to interfere with and even destroy the individual's self-knowledge and perception of external reality) as responses of weakness in face of the challenges of real life. On the other hand, however, Raabe's respect for balance and moderation leads him to question the validity even of this apparently deeply held conviction, to the extent that he suggests that it may sometimes be better to harbour or foster certain illusions than to suffer or inflict certain truths. His basic attitude of harsh realism is thus attenuated and modified to a considerable degree by his feeling for humanitarian considerations. Raabe's work is seen to grow out of the continuing and unresolved tension of two principles - the principle of truth (the desire to expose falsehood, self-delusion and error) and the principle of humanity (the feeling that in certain circumstances some degree of illusion or self-deception has to be tolerated). The tension between the ideal and the practicable, first noted in the analysis of Raabe's attitude to social values and traditions, is thus shown to operate on a much wider level, and is seen, indeed, as the very mainspring of his creativity.

Section Three This Section takes as its starting-point the main conclusions reached in Section II; it attempts on that basis to ascertain Raabe's attitude to the notion of absolute truth, and in particular to demonstrate whether or not Raabe felt the realisation of that concept to be a practical possibility in terms of individual human experience. The answer to these questions is sought in a detailed analysis of Stopfkuchen (1889), of all his novels the one in which Raabe arguably came closest to a positive



conclusion. While Raabe certainly intended Heinrich Schaumann (the figure on whom most of the interest in this Section is centred) to be seen in a predominantly positive light, it is argued that the view of him as an ideal hero, as someone who in terms of human perception has transcended all social barriers and personal limitations, is unwarrantedly one-sided, and therefore inaccurate. On the basis of four main considerations - the admitted subjectivity of the book as a whole; the degree of justification accorded to viewpoints other than Schaumann's; the ambiguity of some of the central motifs; and the role played in the novel by chance and the force of circumstances - it is suggested that, far from demonstrating the possibility of absolute perception on the human level, Stopfkuchen illustrates rather Raabe's conviction that, notwithstanding its utility as a standard against which individual achievement may be measured, the notion of perfect truth is not something which can, in real life, ever be attained.

Section Four This Section attempts to summarise the main findings of Sections II and III, and to draw wider conclusions from them. It takes as its starting-point the evidence of Section III concerning Raabe's attitude to the notion of absolute truth and demonstrates a gradual but irreverisble development from a belief in the possibility of achieving absolute truth to a position of hesitant agnosticism on that subject, and from there eventually to a complete though reluctant rejection of Raabe's previously demonstrated optimism. This final stage is reached with Stopfkuchen, and is confirmed in the structure, atmosphere and characterisation of Die Akten des Vogelsangs and Altershausen,

where Raabe clearly implies that a state of "not knowing" is the normal and unchallengeable condition of humanity. The different "escapes from reality" examined in Section II are now seen not as prime sources of illusion on their own account, but rather as individual manifestations of a wider, all-embracing situation. In particular, Raabe's increasing scepticism regarding the possibility of complete self-knowledge is reflected in the fragmentary composition of most of the families he portrays, in developments attaching to his treatment of the journey as a process of education and enlightenment and, most intensely, in the increasingly frequent use he makes of fully personalised narrators.

Despite the apparent pessimism underlying such considerations, however, it is suggested that Raabe is by no means an out-and-out sceptic, for at the same time he retains a belief in some form of rational force responsible for the creation and sustenance of life as we know it. A brief comparison of the atmosphere of Die Akten des Vogelsangs with that of Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks (written only five years later) confirms just how much this essentially traditional belief influences the whole tenor of Raabe's work. Raabe thus shares the insecurity and isolation so characteristic of his twentieth-century successors, but unlike most of them he balances this with a constant feeling for an enduring coherence and purposefulness to life; in this respect he must be seen very much as a transitional figure.

The conclusion to this Section attempts to demonstrate that Raabe's work is characterised by two basic tensions: his view of the notion of absolute truth is founded on an equilibrium between the sense of human isolation and the belief in some form of

rational life-force, while his attitude to the "escapes from reality" examined in Section II is informed by a constant tension between the principle of truth and the principle of humanity. Although towards the end of his life Raabe seems attracted more and more to the principle of truth, his late work is nevertheless characterised above all by an enduring ambivalence arising from the tensions around which it is constructed. He offers penetrating insight deepened by the knowledge of its own subjectivity. His work, although restricted in scope, represents not only a notable contribution to the corpus of prose writing of his day but also a valuable interpretative comment on many vital aspects of life in the middle and later nineteenth century.

Appendix A This Appendix offers a brief survey of Raabe's portrayal of mental abnormality. The discussion, centred on Im Siegeskranze (1866), Deutscher Mondschein (1872) and Altershausen (1902), yields two main conclusions. Firstly, in none of the works in question does Raabe's central interest lie in the portrayal of mental abnormality as a state interesting in its own right; rather the depiction of the mentally abnormal, of their individual situation and of their relationship to others, is employed primarily as an oblique means of social criticism. Secondly, the relative infrequency of Raabe's portrayal of mental abnormality, especially when seen against the background of his virtual obsession with questions of perception, suggests that his interest lies primarily in situations where the individual has an element, however limited, of choice. To this degree it is justifiable to speak of him as an ethical writer. Finally it is suggested that on the basis of



these findings, Raabe's portrayal of mental abnormality offers the possibility of a confluence of the two apparently irreconcilable traditions of Raabe-criticism - the older "ethically" oriented and the (predominantly post-war) "socially" oriented traditions.

Appendix B This Appendix provides a list of family units in Raabe's work, divided into the following categories: A. Incomplete family units: 1. Fatherless families (17 entries). 2. Motherless families (30 entries). 3. Parentless families (29 entries). B. Complete family units (33 entries).

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#### Bibliographical Note

Except where otherwise stated, all quotations from Raabe's works and correspondence are taken from the Braunschweiger Ausgabe, for which the abbreviation B.A. has been used throughout.

Where a date is inserted in conjunction with one of Raabe's published works, the reference is to the year in which the manuscript was completed. It is felt that this is more helpful, with regard to trends and developments in Raabe's work as a whole, than the date of publication.

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#### Erratum

Owing to an oversight in the numbering of the pages, the number 308 has been omitted.

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SECTION ONE - INTRODUCTION

It is no doubt a truism to state that the task of the creative artist, whether his art is exercised in visual, musical or literary terms, is to involve himself in certain fundamental questions which have been posed repeatedly since the dawn of human consciousness - questions of metaphysics, of life and death, and of the individual's position within creation; questions of social relationships and personal standards; and questions of aesthetic and artistic values. Whether he has been seen as a prophet, a seer, whose task it is to separate the significant from the trivial, the meaningful from the banal, the inner essence from the outer appearance, or whether his position has been merely that of the faithful reflector of immediate situations and events, his concern has been inevitably with reality of one sort or another. In this respect the artist's work must - whether consciously or unconsciously - embody some sort of comment on the context with which it is concerned, that is to say, on the preoccupations which gave rise to it in the first place and on the given reality underlying its conception. In a sense the work of art represents, therefore, if not a direct representation of reality itself (whatever definition might be attached to that term), then at least a search after it, an attempt to grasp and present in imaginative terms some significant aspect of existence. One such important aspect is undoubtedly the whole question of human perception, and as soon as this topic is raised, a number of related supplementary questions springs immediately to mind: what means, for example, does the individual have at his disposal to try to come to terms with himself, his environment and his fellow

human-beings? What factors are chiefly responsible for the high degree of human misunderstanding and illusion so obvious wherever we care to look? And is there any possibility of overcoming these barriers to communication and understanding and of achieving a quality of vision unobscured by the many handicaps imposed through the individual's subjective perspective and finite nature? These are questions which, to cast the net no wider than the pursuit of literature, have exercised creative writers since the beginnings of civilisation and they will, no doubt, continue to occupy the sensitive spirits of every age, who will with each generation approach them anew, attempting to define for themselves the limits and the possibilities of man's potential for insight and understanding. They are questions which, to narrow the field yet farther to one particular writer, certainly find a powerful and sustained echo in the works of Wilhelm Raabe. They represent the central focus of a number of his novels, especially of those written in the later and generally more enduring phase of his development, and in many other works they lurk constantly just beneath the surface, conditioning the author's presentation of more immediate considerations and imperceptibly influencing the reader's reaction to what is before him.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the obvious significance of the questions I have just raised, both in their own right and in terms of Raabe's personal preoccupations, it is, to say the least, surprising that no coherent, convincing examination of Raabe's attitude to human perception and to the concepts of reality and illusion has as yet

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1 Although this statement appears here without the support of any formal argumentation, I hope to show in the course of this study that it is amply justified.



appeared. The subject has, of course, been mentioned on many occasions as a secondary issue within studies dealing primarily with other problems, and a certain degree of light has thus been shed on it by implication and from a rather oblique angle, but, as far as I am aware, it has never represented the central preoccupation of any single systematic enquiry. We can, it is true, find evidence of some concern with this facet of Raabe's work as long ago as 1917, when an article by Josef Baß in the Mitteilungen für die Gesellschaft der Freunde Wilhelm Raabes took the first crucial step of asserting the importance of illusion and self-deception within the framework of Raabe's work as a whole, and of attempting to define Raabe's attitude to it on the basis of its appearance in a number of novels and Erzählungen. In the course of his thirteen-page article Baß deals (fleetingly for the most part) with eighteen novels and Erzählungen, and reaches two general conclusions regarding Raabe's attitude to illusion and illusory values: firstly, Raabe looks at illusion as a palliative, an opiate to which the individual can and should have repeated recourse in his struggle to find some sort of happiness amidst the sufferings and hardships of reality; and secondly, this supposed defence of illusion and self-deception in psychological terms reflects, according to Baß, Raabe's wider rejection of intellectual standards in favour of intuitive and irrational values.<sup>2</sup> Important as Baß's article undoubtedly is in historical terms, its value is, however, seriously impaired by its often suspect and faulty reasoning: in very many cases, for example, Baß picks out utterances put into the mouths of fictional characters within a novel, and with no further argumentation attributes the sentiments emerging from them to Raabe himself.



This rather naive assumption of an automatic identification of character with author must, I believe, in large measure call his conclusions in question if it does not, indeed, invalidate them entirely. Despite its value in isolating the problem and, to some degree, in defining its importance, Baß's article has, by virtue of its methodological inadequacy, little to offer the student seeking reliable guidance on the topic at issue.

For many years thereafter, the problem of Raabe's attitude to human perception and to the relationship of reality and illusion seems to have lain almost entirely neglected as the object of academic or critical enquiry, and it was not until 1955, with the appearance of a doctoral dissertation by Georg Ullmann, that the subject was once again raised at a serious level. Both the title of his dissertation - „Wirklichkeitserleben und Lebensbewältigung im Werk Wilhelm Raabes“<sup>3</sup> - and his stated aim - „eine grundlegende Auseinandersetzung über den Dichter und sein Werk vom Standpunkt der

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2 Josef Baß: „Illusion und Selbsttäuschung bei W. Raabe“, in Mitteilungen für die Gesellschaft der Freunde Wilhelm Raabes, 7 (1917), nos. 3 & 4, pp. 69-82. The following extracts illustrate the two central points of Baß's argument: „Wenigstens solange wir in einer Selbsttäuschung leben, glauben wir glücklich zu sein, wenngleich sie uns manchmal ebensowohl eines Glückes berauben kann, wie z.B. im ‚Alten Proteus‘ gezeigt wird. Sind wir aus einer Selbsttäuschung erwacht und glauben uns gegen neue gefeit, so ist es eben wieder eine Selbsttäuschung. Wir suchen und finden andere. Daher das einem langen, erfahrungsreichen Leben abgewonnene Gebet: Unsere tägliche Selbsttäuschung gib uns heute!“ (op.cit., pp. 72-73); and: „Macht euch keine Illusionen, sagt die helle, klare Vernunft, wenn ihr nicht unglücklich werden wollt - unsere tägliche Selbsttäuschung gib uns heute! lehrt das Leben, wenn der Mensch wenigstens vorübergehend glücklich sein will.“ (op. cit., pp. 77-78). I shall wish to challenge the validity of both of these statements in the course of this study.

3 Dissertation, University of Jena, 1955.

literarhistorisch-kritischen Methode"<sup>4</sup> - seem to promise a thorough and wide-ranging examination of Raabe's view of reality (and, by the same token, of his attitude to our perception of that reality), but Ullmann's study falls short of expectation in this respect: it is written essentially from a political and sociological point of view, with a fair amount of comment on biographical questions, and amounts to little more than an examination of Raabe's attitude to and place within contemporary society. Such an approach is, of course, all very well within its own terms, but it is less than satisfactory as a tool to unravel a problem whose ramifications extend beyond the purely sociological and political to encompass issues of a wider nature altogether.<sup>5</sup> Here too, the seeker after a comprehensive account of Raabe's attitude to and depiction of human perception must turn away more or less empty-handed.

Four years later, however, with the publication of a more specialised study by Fritz Martini, the critical examination of this topic was carried considerably farther. In his article: „Wilhelm

4. *ibid.*, introduction, p. iv.

5. Ullmann's rigidly political and sociological approach leads in several cases to a distortion of emphasis and even to gross misinterpretation. He claims, for example, to find the centre of interest of Alte Nester in the decline of the nobility as a social class (pp. 60-63), and has little or no comment to make on the much more crucial themes examined in Chapter II, 3 of the present study; he asserts that, along with other fairly similar characters, Karl Krumhardt (Die Akten des Vogelsangs) is sharply condemned by Raabe as an illustration of what he calls „die allgemein-menschliche Erstarrung" (pp. 86-87); he defines Raabe's concept of „die Kanaille" as „die Welt des Kapitalismus, (die) über die Kräfte des moralischen Widerstandes gegen die Versachlichung des menschlichen Gefühls in der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft triumphiert." (p. 115); and he attacks as a serious failing the fact that Raabe's portrayal of positive characters is „absolut nicht klassengebunden": „Seine progressiven Gestalten können aus sämtlichen Klassen kommen, ein Beweis der vielen Widersprüchlichkeiten im Denken und Fühlen des Dichters." (p. 188). Such a catalogue of contortion and prejudice can only undermine in the eyes of the reader the basic premisses of Ullmann's approach.



Raabe's Prinzessin Fisch. Wirklichkeit und Dichtung im erzählenden Realismus des 19. Jahrhunderts,"<sup>6</sup> Martini examines the subject-object relationship in the nineteenth-century prose narrative through the medium of Prinzessin Fisch, and isolates and analyses convincingly several decisive factors in Raabe's presentation of illusion and self-deception in that novel. In particular he highlights what he sees as Raabe's portrayal of the positively creative role which certain forms of illusion may fulfil in certain circumstances, while at the same time illustrating Raabe's characteristic insistence on the need for some sort of fruitful and sustained tension between on the one hand the desirability of accepting life and facing up to it honestly, and on the other the periodic need to take refuge in a form of escapism or wishful thinking in order to maintain some measure of peace of mind.<sup>7</sup> (It will be part of the aim of this study to ascertain whether these observations, which certainly apply to Prinzessin Fisch, also hold good for Raabe's work

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6 First published in Der Deutschunterricht, 1959, no.5, pp.31-58. All references to this article are taken from the reprint included in Raabe in neuer Sicht, edited by Hermann Helmers, Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln & Mainz, 1968, pp.145-172.

7 cf. the following representative extracts: „Das generelle Thema der Prinzessin Fisch ist die Not des Dichters in dieser Zeit. Mit anderen Worten ausgedrückt: es ist das Problem der Phantasie. Denn sie ist einerseits notwendig, um das Leben nicht im Banalen ersticken zu lassen. Sie führt andererseits jedoch verstörend aus den Grenzen der Wirklichkeit hinaus. Sie kann in das Wehrlose, Nürrische oder Wahnhafte, ja bis zu Zerstörungen der Existenz bringen." (p.167); and: „Das Wahrhaftigkeitsethos Raabe's, der diese Doppeldeutigkeit der Phantasie in vielen Erzählungen variiert hat, lag darin, daß er auch hinter das nur Idyllische und Gemüthhafte ein Fragezeichen setzte und in ihm eine - wenn auch schöne und lebensnotwendige - Illusion erkannte. Man hat allzu oberflächlich in Raabe den Dichter dieser Gemüthswelt gelesen, ohne die Doppelgriffe seines humoristisch-ironisch brechenden und reflektierenden Erzählens, das, indem es die Positionen setzt, sie auch schon wieder relativiert und zurücknimmt, ausreichend zu beachten." (p.167).

as a whole).

Martini's study is both perceptive and original; it provides a number of valuable insights and stimuli for the reader with sufficient interest to pursue the matter farther and test his conclusions in a wider context; but because it concentrates - justifiably - on one novel only, it can do no more than indicate generally the patterns underlying Raabe's work as a whole, of which Prinzessin Fisch is only a relatively minor constituent part. We have, in fact, to wait three years for a further discussion of our problem, which is broached in rather wider terms by Marketa Goetz (as she then was). In the course of a fairly brief article devoted mainly to the Krähenfelder Geschichten she ascribes to the following field of enquiry a central position as one of three basic themes of Raabe's work:

Does a man who seems to follow the ways of his fellowmen in quiet contentment really belong to the placid herd - or are there two sides to his nature? What is the difference between 'guilty' and 'innocent', between 'sane' and 'insane'? What is that strange, continually shifting difference between what a man seems to be and what he is? <sup>8</sup>

Thus, although rather tentatively and with primary reference only to a collection of comparatively undistinguished stories, the importance of perception and illusion in terms of Raabe's over-all

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<sup>8</sup> Marketa Goetz: "The Short Stories: A Possible Clue to Wilhelm Raabe.", in The Germanic Review 37 (1962), pp.55-67. The quotation is from p.56.



preoccupations is once more clearly established.<sup>9</sup> Much more impressive, however, is the same scholar's later article of 1968 entitled "The Tailor and the Sweeper. A New Look at Wilhelm Raabe."<sup>10</sup> Here the field of enquiry is broadened to cover eleven novels and Erzählungen taken from all stages of Raabe's career, and although several important works - notably Wunnigel, Alte Nester and Altershausen - are passed over without comment, there can be no doubt that this article represents a new stage in the critical discussion of Raabe's literary preoccupation with the problem of reality and illusion. Behind the (at first sight) rather bizarre terminology of the title, two fundamental patterns are revealed with a sure instinct for the basic directions of Raabe's thought. The "tailor" and the "sweeper" represent separate eternal human types who populate Raabe's work with increasing frequency until towards the end of his career they dominate the scene almost without qualification. The "tailor" is

the man who covers things up, who drapes the bare bones and the solid flesh of life with vivid colours and pleasing patterns, who can change a man's appearance from that of a beggar to that of a king, who, by turning a coat and adding a frill, can bring to life past history. In a sense he is therefore a master of time, a creator of aesthetic norms, the interpreter of the

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9 That Goetz herself sees this theme as important also for Raabe's later (and better) works is evident from her comment on the significance of the Krähnenfelder Geschichten within the context of Raabe's work as a whole: "....in his short stories...the reticent artist admits us, as it were, into his workshop, and we stand there startled, peering at the completed works with the marks of their maker's tools still on them. It is the imperfection in this case that proves most interesting. Raabe's innermost quality is less skilfully concealed in his short stories than in the complex perfection of his later novels." (op. cit., pp. 55-56).

10 In Essays on German literature in honour of C. Joyce Hallamore, edited by Michael Batts and Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz, Toronto, 1968, pp. 152-176.

changing appearance of man. He is the beautifier and artist in colour under whose hands man's condition takes on the appearance of change.

Above all, he can "cover, sweeten and perfume the hard, bitter and frequently anything but fragrant reality of life."<sup>11</sup> The "sweeper", on the other hand, is

the man who has done away with all that it is the Tailor's reason for being. He delves below the surface to the rock bottom of reality. He sweeps away sweet illusions, he despises man's sustained attempt to adorn and conceal the harshness of life and inevitability of death. We must regard as the business of Raabe's Tailors and Sweepers not so much that of the needle and the broom but rather that of the finished pleasing appearance, fit to be shown to the world, and the orderly but chilling emptiness after a clean sweep has been made of things.<sup>12</sup>

The underlying pattern and its fundamental importance are, thus, established from the outset, and from this starting-point, Mrs. Stankiewicz works her way towards two main conclusions. In the first place, she finds that "great characters ought to be Tailors; Sweepers are alien to life",<sup>13</sup> thus implying a basic sympathy on Raabe's part with the psychological function of certain forms of illusion and self-deception. Her final position is, however, somewhat removed from this:

If Raabe had continued writing for another twenty years, he would have continued to give us at intervals parallels and modified versions of characters like Adam Asche, Heinrich Schaumann, Velten Andres and Karl Krumhardt. In all likelihood he would never have reached a final resolution of the Tailor and Sweeper problem but would have kept recasting it in different moulds, earnestly and persistently attempting ... to reach out for a further exploration of the lasting

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11 Goetz-Stankiewicz, "The Tailor and the Sweeper...", p.154.

12 *ibid.*, pp.154-55.

13 *ibid.*, p.159.



dilemma of thinking man's dualism: the drive to discover reality and to conceal it with another reality. Often he is unable, like Täubrich Pascha, to decide which is which.<sup>14</sup>

The essential ambivalence of Raabe's attitude to human illusion is clearly spelled out here. Because of its relative brevity, Mrs. Stankiewicz's article represents a (very valid and convincing) general statement of view rather than a comprehensive analysis. It does not claim to have exhausted the subject - although, for example, it establishes the attitude of the "sweeper" as "escapist", it does not, and indeed cannot analyse Raabe's varying attitude to different forms of "escape" or to the same "escape" at different points in his development<sup>15</sup> - but it does point the way forward to further investigation on a more detailed level. It is a very valuable and pioneering piece of work to which anyone with an interest in the subject at issue must feel in some way indebted.

In the years since the appearance of Mrs. Stankiewicz's article an increased volume of critical interest has been brought to bear on the problem of Raabe's attitude to human perception, and in particular to his portrayal of the opposition of reality and illusion. Volkmar Sander, for example, has contributed a short but penetrating study of the relationship, in three of Raabe's representative later novels, of narrator and reader, and has shown how by the use, among other techniques, of wide-ranging literary, historical and mythological allusion, of apparently interminable

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14 *ibid.*, p.175.

15 These and other aspects - which an article of twenty-five pages cannot reasonably be expected to encompass - are dealt with in the course of the present study.



repetition and of concentration on seemingly unimportant people and events, Raabe pursues a deliberate policy of disillusioning the reader and destroying utterly his initial expectations;<sup>16</sup> and in the United Kingdom, two fairly recent full-length studies have shed further light on the subject, if only as a by-product of their central preoccupations: Stanley Radcliffe's examination of the significance of the eccentric in Raabe's novels and Gerald Opie's investigation of childhood and the childlike in Raabe both have much to say on the problem of perception and illusion, but by virtue of their particular orientation neither claims to offer a direct, comprehensive critique of so general a topic.<sup>17</sup> Here too, the need for a more broadly based complementary study is apparent.

It is clear, then, that until now it has been the fate of the present topic either to be dealt with systematically but through the medium of a restricted number of individual works or to figure obliquely in a longer study to whose central focus it lies somewhat at a tangent. In this respect what Raabe-scholarship has achieved can be compared to a half-completed jigsaw - while certain individual pieces are firmly fixed in their proper place, the positioning of others is rather hazy and obscure, and still others seem to have no clear function in the picture of which they should and do form a part. Certain isolated areas of clarity

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16 Volkmar Sander: „Illusionszerstörung und Wirklichkeitserfassung im Roman Raabes" in Deutsche Romantheorien des 19. Jahrhunderts, hrsg. von Reinhold Grimm, Frankfurt und Bonn, 1968, pp.218-232.

17 Stanley Radcliffe: "The figure of the eccentric in the works of Wilhelm Raabe and its significance for his literary achievement." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Bristol, 1970; and Gerald Opie: "Childhood and the childlike in the fiction of Wilhelm Raabe." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Exeter, 1971.

notwithstanding, the picture is as yet not properly formed, the pieces are not yet all fully integrated, and the patterns and connections are not yet clearly evident; and indeed, Günter Witschel has already pointed out in his comparative study of Die Innerste, Das Odfeld and Stopfkuchen the existence of this gap in knowledge, with the implied corollary that what is needed is a systematic study of the whole question, attempting, to continue the previous metaphor, to link up the disparate elements of the jigsaw into a coherent and unified whole.<sup>18</sup>

Within this context, the main aims of the present study can, therefore, be summarised thus: to isolate the central elements in Raabe's attitude to and portrayal of the possibilities and limitations of human perception; to examine the relationship of these separate elements and to establish what underlying patterns, if any, are involved; and finally, to make some contribution towards an assessment of the significance of this aspect for Raabe's work as a whole and towards a consideration of Raabe's position in literary and historical terms. This study does not claim to offer an unchallengeably comprehensive account of the topic at issue, nor does it attempt to establish a general interpretation of Raabe's work as a whole. I have been throughout only too aware of the truth behind Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz's statement that Raabe's work

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18 Günter Witschel: Raabe-Integrationen. „Die Innerste“. „Das Odfeld“. „Stopfkuchen“, Bonn, 1969. Witschel establishes a progression in the achievement of the "positive" characters of the three works mentioned in the title from „nüchternen Sinn“ in Die Innerste through „Klarsichtigkeit“ in Das Odfeld to „Einsicht in den Zusammenhang der Dinge“ in Stopfkuchen, and comments: „....mit dieser Stufung kehrt, gewiß nicht zufällig, ein Charakterzug wieder, der in der bisherigen Beurteilung der Dichters Raabe nicht berücksichtigt wurde.“ (op. cit., p. 61).



is so highly integrated that one aspect cannot be broached without evoking a whole series of interrelated reactions until the whole complex tapestry of his writing is involved.<sup>19</sup> For this reason I have felt compelled to impose strict selectivity on the material for discussion. Because of the volume of possible material involved, and of the breadth of the subject I have, generally speaking, chosen not to adopt a purely chronological method, but have instead dealt with certain selected works chosen on the basis of intrinsic merit and historical significance. Each of the novels discussed either has something valuable to offer in its own right or else, because of the position it occupies within Raabe's work as a whole, it is particularly well suited to illustrate some important development in one aspect or another of the topic in hand. (In many cases, of course, these two separate factors will be found to coincide). While this method admittedly weakens the sense of progression and development well catered for in a chronologically based examination, it does offer at least two advantages which, in my opinion, offset this possible reduction in continuity. In the first place, it means that attention can be focussed on the points of maximum interest, that is to say, on those works which illustrate most plainly the peculiarly personal features of Raabe's presentation of questions of human perception; in common with several other important facets of his work, his particular approach to these questions did not emerge with any degree of individual clarity until

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19 cf. Goetz-Stankiewicz: "The Tailor and the Sweeper..." p.154: "Touch on one of Raabe's characters and his whole universe begins to move. Begin to interpret the meaning of his recurrent images, and one discovers that one is coping with his entire Weltanschauung."

a comparatively late stage. To have included, for the sake of exhaustiveness, an examination of his earlier works (which, as has often been noted in the past, are in many ways uncharacteristic of the more mature and distinctly individualist fiction of later years) would have added little to the results of the investigation as a whole and might, indeed, have tended to obscure them to some degree. In the second place it seems to me that a selective examination may well allow the interdependence of many aspects of Raabe's mature fiction to emerge more naturally and clearly than could readily be the case with a strictly chronological approach. Where a particular development has seemed relevant to the subject as a whole, I have tried to trace it within the general framework already indicated, but more important than individual developments relating to isolated aspects of Raabe's creativity is, I believe, the high degree of multi-dimensionality and integration so characteristic of his later work; I have tried in some way to reflect this basic feature of his writing (which, of course, in turn implies important conclusions with regard to his general view of life) through the selective approach adopted in the present study.

In what follows, I have attempted to deal with the topic as a whole under two main headings. In Section Two I have isolated what seem to me to be the four most crucial areas of illusion, self-deception and misunderstanding depicted in Raabe's mature fiction - the passive reliance on received traditions and social values; the recourse to fantasy and imagination as a counter to the pressures of daily life; the attempt to create or re-create the ideal or remembered world of childhood purity and simplicity; and the temptation to see a shortcut to the goal of vision and self-realisation in a radical

simplification of life's complexities and in a reduction of its dilemmas to one or two simple factors. Underlying the detailed analyses of this Section is the question of Raabe's own view, in personal, social and psychological terms, of these superficially divergent but, in several important senses, profoundly related attitudes and modes of behaviour. Is his view the same in each case, or can we detect noticeable variations of emphasis? Does it remain static and fixed throughout, or do any significant developments come into play? These questions also are broached in Section Two.

Arising out of Section Two (which deals in large measure with what might be described as the negative aspects of human perception) come the further questions posed in the following Section where, on the basis of a detailed examination of Stopfkuchen, supported by periodic comparisons with Unruhige Gäste and Das Odfeld, I have attempted to ascertain Raabe's attitude to the notion of absolute truth. Does he, for example, ever get beyond the idealistic clichés of the early works and the sober resignation of later years to portray in convincing fashion a figure able to transcend the limitations and handicaps which seem to occupy such a large part of his view of the world? And what are the implications of the answer to this question in terms of his over-all attitude to human perception? As I suggested above, these are important questions, and until now they have not been subjected to a wide-ranging critical examination. The present study aims to rectify that situation, at least in some measure, and it is with that in mind that I should like to turn first of all to Raabe's concern with particular areas of human illusion and self-deception, to his portrayal of the "escape from reality".



## SECTION TWO - ESCAPE FROM REALITY

### Chapter 1 - Escape into conformity

When confronted with the question of the individual's escape from reality, we might well first of all imagine a dreamy sort of personality with no ambition or drive, drifting along from day to day, sustained by a series of continuing comforting illusions which he uses as a barrier against the threatening reality of the outside world. Such characters do appear fairly frequently in Raabe,<sup>1</sup> and I shall be considering some of them in the Chapter entitled "Escape into fantasy", but in Raabe's eyes they by no means represent the only, or indeed the most obvious possibility of escape from reality. A much more significant "escape-route", at least in terms of the number of people who take it, is offered to those who, instead of attempting to form an independent view of life on the basis of their own experience and to judge other people individually and on their merits, choose rather to adopt uncritically the standards and values of the society in which they have been brought up. In what follows I hope to show how the term "escape into conformity" may be applied to this way of living, and to indicate the ways in which, according to Raabe, it limits and distorts the individual's perspective.

A considerable number of previous writers has concentrated, when discussing Raabe's attitude to society, on his relationship to and treatment of the group generally described as Philister - philistines - and has given only scant attention to the depiction of

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1 For an extremely painstaking and thorough examination of this aspect of Raabe's work, see Stanley Radcliffe's study of the eccentric, quoted above.

other groups - in themselves equally relevant representatives of society, such as lawyers, academics and clergymen, who claim considerable - some would say inordinate - attention in many of his works.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Raabe's depiction of the escape into conformity concerns his attitude not only to the philistines (although admittedly this plays an important part in it) but to society as a whole, and thus differing stresses can be detected from work to work. To quote some typical examples, in Abu Telfan (1867) the mood of the narrator moves between ironic mockery and frustration; in Der Schüdderump (1869) and Zum wilden Mann (1873) the tone is somewhat more bitter; in Horacker (1875) and Stopfkuchen (1889) the author pokes fun from his superior standpoint at the benighted characters (although even here the serious intent is never far from the surface); and finally, in Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) Raabe offers us, for the first and last time, a sober, analytical critique of society apparently written from the point of view of someone aware of its limitations and distortions but ultimately committed to living according to its demands and bringing his children up in the same way.

Of these six books, the two most fruitful for our purposes are Abu Telfan and Die Akten des Vogelsangs, for they show us most clearly the developments and the constant factors in Raabe's view of society and of the illusions fostered by too dogmatic an adherence to its

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2 The view that Raabe pays too much attention to this section of society is held strongly by Georg Lukacs (Deutsche Dichter des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts, Berlin, 1952, containing an essay on Raabe, written in 1939), and Georg Ullmann (op. cit.). It is certainly true that with the exception of some (though by no means all) of his historical works, and of some inconsequential sketches, there is hardly one of Raabe's seventy published novels, Novellen and short stories in which at least one representative of the learned professions does not play a fairly prominent part.



values. Whereas Abu Telfan is the first serious novel in which Raabe's delineation of society and social values shows clear evidence of a growing emancipation from the highly derivative concepts and techniques of his early works, Die Akten des Vogelsangs represents in a sense the culmination of a life-long pre-occupation with this particular aspect of human relationships; it is the last completed novel in which the major interest lies in an assessment, or re-assessment, of the effects wrought by society's persistent claims on the allegiance of the individual; and the very differences between it and the earlier novel help to highlight what is most important in this respect: there is a lapse of twenty-eight years (and thirty-two works) between the composition of Abu Telfan (published in 1867) and Die Akten des Vogelsangs (completed in 1895); the position of the narrator could hardly be more different;<sup>3</sup> the nature and problems of the communities involved barely overlap; and the alternatives to society depicted in the two novels are fundamentally opposed, having in common only their rejection of and refusal to live as part of the society they were born into.<sup>4</sup> Does this mean, then, that during the period in which most of his effective writing was completed Raabe's attitude to social values,

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3 For a generally accurate and very thorough exposition of the position of the narrator in what he calls "die Stuttgarter Trilogie" (including Abu Telfan) and in the "Braunschweiger Trilogie" (including the Akten), see Hermann Helmers: Die bildenden Mächte in den Romanen Raabes. (Weinheim, 1960), and "Die Figur des Erzählers bei Raabe" (Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft, 1965, pp.9-33, reprinted in Raabe in neuer Sicht, pp.317-336)).

4 In Abu Telfan, the alternatives to society (such as they are) are represented principally by Frau Klaudine Fehleysen and (for part of the book) by Leonhard Hagebucher. The differences in temperament, activity, aim and effectiveness between them and Velten Andres will, I hope, emerge in the course of this Chapter.

and his literary portrayal of them underwent a transformation so total that his earlier novels are in effect repudiated by the later ones? Or can we detect, beneath the superficial contrasts, evidence of progression rather than denial, of an underlying consistency of approach which is common to all, or at least most of the works from this period and which in that way draws them closer together within the context of Raabe's oeuvre as a whole? These are questions which can be answered only on the basis of a detailed examination of the works concerned, and it is with them in mind that I should like now to turn first of all to a consideration of Raabe's portrayal of social values in Abu Telfan.

(i) Abu Telfan (1867)

It is clear from the outset that in Abu Telfan society is depicted on three levels.<sup>5</sup> The conception of a unified society pursuing the same goals appears nowhere in Raabe, with the possible exception of the idealistic Des Reiches Krone (1870), and in Abu Telfan the fragmentation is revealed in a particularly ruthless fashion. The cleavage depicted here is shown in the three widely

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5 Raabe's sense of the almost insuperable fragmentation of society is obvious from the very beginning of his literary career, and is clearly in evidence even in such youthful works as Die Chronik der Sperlingsgasse (1855), Ein Fr hling (1857) and Der Hungerpastor (1863). Even in the contrasting Nach dem gro en Kriege (1861) and Unseres Herrgotts Kanzlei (1861), where he portrays communities more united than would normally be expected, he is careful not to deny the inevitable presence and powerful effects of underlying disunity and social cleavage. The social fragmentation involved in Abu Telfan is demonstrated in concrete terms at an early stage by Nikola in her scathing references to the function of the gate separating the Schlo platz from the main street of the Residenz. Her opinion is vindicated in the course of the book and in particular after the unmasking of von Glimmern, when Hagebucher and Hugo von Bumsdorf set off to find and rescue Nikola (B.A. 7/319).



differing social strata - none of them showing much understanding of or sympathy for the others - through which we are led. The upper-class world of petty-state politics (represented by von Glimmern, Frau von Einstein, Herr von Betzendorff and, to a lesser degree, by Major Wildberg, his wife and Nikola) has no interest in or wish to learn about the less privileged inhabitants of the same city (represented by Leutnant Kind, Täubrich and the people of the Kesselstraße), and is, in turn, treated with complete indifference by them. (See B.A. 7/36,319); and the lack of communication or of a sense of fellow-feeling between these groups and the small-town, rurally orientated citizens of Nippenburg and Bumsdorf is just as evident, both in the obviously different milieux in which they operate and in their reactions when they come together in a set situation (as, for example, in the visit to the Residenz of Herr von Bumsdorf and Vetter Wassertreter to hear Leonhard Hagebucher's first lecture on his experiences in the Tumorland). In view of the widespread lack of interest in other people's situations with which we are confronted here, it is not surprising that the representatives of the different social groupings imagine that they have very little - if anything at all - in common with people from another segment of society, but when we discard their individual perspectives and look at the novel as a whole, we see that, in fact, Raabe depicts several basic characteristics shared by the typical



adherents of all the different groups.<sup>6</sup> Despite this deliberate stress on similarity, however, it is obvious that at the time he wrote Abu Telfan, Raabe's interest did not extend in an equal degree to all these groups; it lies here primarily with that section of society most often characterised as philistines, and represented here by Leonhard Hagebucher's family, relations and acquaintances in Nippenburg and Bumsdorf. It is in the changing relationship between them and Hagebucher that Raabe portrays most clearly the conception of escape into conformity which he seeks to convey in Abu Telfan.

Our first observation on Raabe's depiction of the philistines in Abu Telfan receives confirmation as early as the second Chapter (where we meet some of the characters from the Nippenburg-Bumsdorf circle for the first time). In the conversation in which Herr von Bumsdorf congratulates Hagebucher's father on the safe and totally unexpected return of his son after ten years' captivity, we have a first indication of how restricted and one-dimensional the world of the philistine is. After relating how Frau Hagebucher dismisses some of the more outrageous rumours said by Herr von Bumsdorf to be circulating, the narrator continues:

„Die ganze Gegend auf sechs Meilen in der Runde schlägt einen Purzelbaum über diese Geschichte!“ rief jetzt der Ritter von Bumsdorf im hellen Enthusiasmus. „So

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6 One of the most striking of these shared characteristics is the way in which Raabe establishes a conflict-situation with regard both to the philistines (by virtue of the challenge of Hagebucher) and to the ruling classes (by virtue of the activities of Leutnant Kind and to a lesser degree, of Frau Klaudine and Nikola). The custom and practice of both groups is governed by a lie, and both react in a communally hostile manner to the challenge of someone attempting to introduce new values from outside. A formal link between both groups is forged through the figure of Hagebucher, who plays a vital part in both milieux, as does, to a lesser extent, Nikola.

etwas ist ja noch gar nicht dagewesen; kein Mensch hat es für möglich gehalten, das geht über alle Zeitungsblätter und Romangeschichten von Eduard und Kunigunde, über den Gehörnten Siegfried, die Gartenlaube und den ganzen Alexander Dumas. Hagebucher, alter Freund, Sie sind ein glücklicher Patron, und wenn es Ihnen ansteht, so vertausche ich auf der Stelle meinen Leutnant gegen Ihren Afrikaner." (B.A. 7/19)

Von Bumsdorf, otherwise by no means portrayed negatively, exhibits here the very epitome of the philistine's stock response in such a situation, where he is suddenly confronted by someone or something unusual or outside his normal field of experience: his reaction is a mixture of curiosity and disbelief. His curiosity, already observed in the easy credence given to the most absurd rumours about Hagebucher,<sup>7</sup> gives way to an equally childish concentration on the more bizarre aspects of his return. Once the initial impact of the event has died away, von Bumsdorf may, no doubt, begin to take an interest in Hagebucher as a human being, for his own sake; for the time being, however, he can see him only as an object of curiosity and wonderment, something to be spoken about among friends at the local inn and probably never called to mind again as soon as the next unexpected incident drives it from memory. This reaction will be recognised as fairly typical, not only among people whom we would describe as philistines, and is in itself unremarkable. What is more important for our purposes is the comparison he draws between Hagebucher's experiences and other adventures which, he says, have now been surpassed. The point is

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7 We are told, for example, of a rumour according to which Hagebucher had a ring through his nose, and of another according to which he had been tattooed green and yellow! No doubt we can assume that other stories of a similar nature had reached von Bumsdorf's ears and that we are spared them only because of Frau Hagebucher's outraged reaction to the first two.



that the comparisons he makes are all either fictitious or legendary - newspaper serials, a folksong, a Volksbuch, a literary periodical and a celebrated author of adventure stories. It is as if he finds the whole idea of the Tumorkieland, Africa and far-off lands in general something so foreign that they must be ultimately unreal, merely products of fantasy or of the imagination.<sup>8</sup> In thus linking Hagebucher's experiences with the realm of fiction and legend, he seems to deny to them (subconsciously, no doubt) their own reality. We gain the distinct impression that, for a personality such as von Bumsdorf, anything which has not been experienced directly, or which has not been introduced thoroughly into the immediate consciousness, cannot be totally real; only the immediate, the visual, the well known and the experienced have any claim to reality.

It is obvious that such an outlook (if there is anything outward-looking about it at all!) must impose severe and damaging limitations upon the person subject to it. It leaves out of account, for example, the whole field of the reality of the imagination and assumes further that objective and exhaustive truth can be arrived at from an unashamedly individual (and therefore subjective) standpoint; yet von Bumsdorf is by no means alone in his assumption of the exclusive and comprehensive nature of his own perception. This assumption is shared by practically every

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8 It must not be forgotten, however, that in the 1860s the African continent had not by any means been thoroughly explored and mapped; the territory beyond the lower reaches of the Nile was still to a large degree wrapped in mystery, so it is not too surprising that for the villagers, "ein Mann, der aus dem unbekannten innersten Afrika heimgekehrt, jedenfalls etwas Ungewöhnlicheres war als der abenteuerlichste Amerikafahrer." (B.A. 7/38). "Darkest Africa" was still a sort of fairyland in the minds of many people.



self-respecting character in Nippenburg. We see it most crassly in the proceedings of the family council, called by Hagebucher senior (whose actual reasons I shall be discussing below), ostensibly to decide on plans for Leonhard's future career.<sup>9</sup> Instead of taking Leonhard's past experiences and present circumstances into consideration, and attempting to put themselves in his position and appreciate his feelings, most of those present seem to take the view that the years he spent in the Tumurkieland and elsewhere can, and indeed must now be discounted and put on one side. They assume that these experiences, all of which lie outwith their own direct or assimilated knowledge, have added nothing to Leonhard's understanding of life and have nothing valuable to teach them,<sup>10</sup> and so their unanimous recommendation - given, the narrator tells us, by each member at great length and with the unquestioning confidence of self-attributed omniscience - is that Leonhard too should regard the years spent in the alien (and to them unknown) environment, and the insights he accumulated there, as worthless and wasteful. The only way for him to pick up the threads of a meaningful life again is, they say, to imagine that his years of absence were a complete void, and to shape his future behaviour on that of the model citizens who stayed at home, following the path of enlightened virtue. The irony of the narrator, in using the very terms the family themselves

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9 B.A. 7/40-50.

10 It need hardly be stressed that Hagebucher's view is somewhat different. At an early stage, he emphasises the significance of his experiences, indicating that, for all the suffering they entailed, his years of captivity gave him an opportunity to reflect at length on his own situation as indeed on life in general. (B.A. 7/23) This is something which the villagers, taken up as they are in their daily routine tasks and pleasures, have not been able to do.

would have employed, is unmistakable:

Jeder hatte seinen Rat zu geben und gab ihn gern und ausführlich. Es war gar nicht so schwer, sich anständig durchs Leben zu bringen, wenn nur der gute Wille dazu vorhanden war; verschiedene Wege führten noch aus der Nichtsnutzigkeit hinüber in die wünschenswerteste Respektabilität, und ein jeder stellte sich mit Vergnügen als Wegweiser auf den Kreuzweg,.... (B.A. 7/43)<sup>11</sup>

The opposition between "uselessness" and "respectability" and their equation respectively with foreign fantasy and homespun reality is especially revealing. In fact, they could almost have been taken directly from Tante Schnödler, the most loquacious spokeswoman of all, who, after claiming that Leonhard still has to be rehabilitated spiritually as well as physically and socially<sup>12</sup> and that „Leute ..., die im Lande geblieben sind und sich in Gottesfurcht fünfundzwanzig Jahre redlich genährt haben" (B.A. 7/43) are in the best position to say how this should be done, summarises her advice thus:

„Was ich nun dem Leonhard raten will, das ist, er tut alles hochmütige und ausländische Wesen ab und fängt da wieder an, wo er aufgehört hat, ... läßt sich von neuem in die Schreiberei einschließen und kann's mit der Zeit und der Nachhülfe von der Verwandtschaft wieder zu einem nützlichen Mitgliede vons Gemeinwesen und bis zum Ratsskribenten bringen." (B.A. 7/43-44, my emphasis).

This basic characteristic of the philistine - to regard his own

11 See also Tante Schnödler's condescending welcome to Hagebucher at the beginning of the family council (B.A. 7/41) and the narrator's characterisation of Hagebucher in the terms the villagers themselves would have used (B.A. 7/52).

12 Noteworthy here is the characteristic assumption of the philistine that the external, the physical and (in terms of moral judgments) the meaningless can be identified with the internal, the spiritual and the meaningful: „Wir danken dir, Herr Neffe, und freuen uns, dich anständig und christlich in Rock, Hose und Weste wieder unter uns zu haben." (B.A. 7/41).



perspective as sovereign and his own experience as comprehensive, and to look on everything above or outside them as in some way morally suspect, imaginary or downright unreal - is shown again and again in Abu Telfan, and an interesting revelation of it is seen in the repeated subconscious speech-patterns and vocabulary of some of the characters. The most obvious example is Leonhard Hagebucher's father. Raabe's portrayal of old Hagebucher (in some ways quite affectionate, recalling his basically ambivalent attitude to the phenomenon of philistinism) shows him as an archetypal, dogmatic and unyielding philistine, and verges on caricature, but is saved by several finely observed features, one of which is the old man's habit of using the language of his profession - sometimes in the most inappropriate context and not always subconsciously - when discussing some quite unrelated topic. A typical occurrence is found when, shortly before the arrival of Herr von Bumsdorf (mentioned above), he advises his wife to relax and look at Leonhard's return in as calm a manner as possible. When he continues:

„Sei vernünftig und wirf einem das Rechenexempel nicht noch mehr durcheinander - heule nicht, Alte, dazu ist doch wahrhaftig kein Grund - der Junge ist wieder da, das ist jedenfalls ein Trost, den wir für's erste sicher ins Haben schreiben können,...." (B.A. 7/18)

we have the impression of a man who must have been interested more or less exclusively in his profession and who has acquired the habit of using technical or professional terms in a more general context. This impression is strengthened on other occasions when we hear old Hagebucher talk,<sup>13</sup> and other people too are characterised, although

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13 Two particularly characteristic occurrences are found on B.A. 7/19 and 42.



to a much lesser extent, by the same habit. It indicates a rather passive, unreflective attitude to life, one which, lacking the energy or dynamism actively to extend its horizons by taking an imaginative interest in what lies beyond its immediate field, is incapable of anything except a limited and (by virtue of its lack of imagination) unconsciously subjective perspective.<sup>14</sup>

To judge by the number of people whom Raabe portrays in a more or less similar fashion, it would seem that a large proportion of the human race falls into this category. In the case of old Hagebucher, however, the situation is more extreme. Not only does his use of accounting terms reflect a consuming interest in his daily work (which is, of course, commendable in its own way); with him it betrays a man for whom his own work and experience are the only true reality, and for whom anything beyond these limits is of no account. Old Hagebucher exhibits the characteristics observed in Major von Bumsdorf, but in a crasser form. It may seem farcical, or perhaps merely amusing, when he tells his wife in all seriousness: „Addieren und subtrahieren können ist zuletzt doch die Hauptsache, und die Kunst hat noch keinen Menschen im Stich gelassen, man muß sie nur richtig anzuwenden wissen.“ (B.A. 7/18), but the extent and effect of his introverted view of life become tragically clear when, on leaving the Goldener Pfau after suffering a whole evening of scorn

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14. This is confirmed by the way of life of the other figures who are characterised in this way. Major Wildberg, whose reaction to the final catastrophe is expressed in exclusively military terms (B.A. 7/324: „Es war die Bombe aus dem Blakelymbrser! ... Sie fiel unter uns und zersprang regelrecht in ihre hundertunddreißig Stücke.“), leads a comfortable, to a great degree unquestioning life, while Leutnant Kind (cf. B.A. 7/209 for an example of his wide use of 'professional' terms) is held in thrall by his own overriding passion - revenge on von Glimmern.

directed by his fellow-citizens at his son, he meets Leonhard outside the door of his house. When Leonhard mentions the Tumorkieland, he loses his temper, shouts abuse at him at the top of his voice and bolts the door in his face after concluding: „Ich lasse mir meine Rechnungen nicht verwirren, ... und einen Rechnungsfehler verachte ich, dulde ich nicht und werfe ihn hinaus!" (B.A. 7/102) Both by his thoughts (which the narrator kindly conveys to us) and reactions in the Goldener Pfau, and by the language he uses here to describe the relationship to his son, old Hagebucher shows not only the acutely limited nature of his own perspective but also his utter inability to appreciate the fact that other possible ways of looking at life exist, or that if they do exist, they could be as valid as or indeed more valid than his own.

In old Hagebucher, therefore, as in Herr von Bumsdorf, Tante Schnöddler and the other characters mentioned in this context, we have concrete examples of the widespread, not to say basic tendency of the philistine to accept only his own experience as real and only his own perspective as adequate, and to reject all other possibilities as necessarily invalid.<sup>15</sup> The restricted nature of the individual perspective is a characteristic common to all the 'escapes' from reality with which we are concerned in this Section, but the inability to recognise in oneself this incomplete, inadequate, subjective

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15 When we speak of the philistine's 'own' perspective, we have, of course, to recognise that this is in most cases merely a reflection of what the consensus opinion of the community has evolved. It is one of the basic characteristics of the philistine that he prefers to accept a commonly held idea uncritically, and to take refuge in force of numbers rather than face the responsibility of evolving individual assessments of people and situations. This, in turn, is a reflection of the group consciousness of the philistines, which I shall be discussing later in this Chapter.



perspective is something we are more aware of with the philistines than with the others. They alone have the self-assurance to assume not only that their perspective does justice to reality (a large enough assumption in itself), but that any other way of looking at the world must be so deficient as to render it unworthy of consideration.

I hope to show, in Section III, in my examination of the characters Raabe portrays most positively in terms of human perception, that those very people who, from a happy combination of their circumstances and their own efforts, have achieved a fair measure of success in understanding the people around them and in coming to terms with the world are those who are always ready to admit the subjective nature of their own insight and the limited range of their vision. They, who have used their intelligence and imagination in an effort to come to grips with reality, and whose perceptive powers are, therefore, rather better developed than those of most other people, are painfully aware that the world is a complex place, that it can be seen and (at least partially) understood from many more or less equally valid points of view, and that we can seldom be sure of our own judgment concerning the motives or character of some other person. No such qualifications appear necessary to the philistines. They avoid the effort of assimilating first-hand knowledge for themselves and shirk the responsibility of forming independently personal values and of making individual judgments. Instead, they fall back thankfully on a fixed set of standards worked out by their forefathers, passed down from generation to generation and adhered to more or less unquestioningly not only by themselves but also by the overwhelming majority in their community. This action can be characterised as a retreat into the security of



the group; an illustration of its consequences is seen in the philistine's tendency to try to make others at least partly responsible for his own decisions. Such a desire to avoid responsibility and to take refuge in the safety of a consensus is evident, for example, in the real reasons behind old Hagebucher's decision to call a family council to decide on his son's future:

.... es war jedenfalls wünschenswert, daß die liebe Freundschaft und Verwandtschaft ihre Unterschriften oder drei Kreuze zu dem Wahrspruch hergebe. Man hatte sich denn doch zu rechtfertigen vor der Welt, und das konnte nicht besser bewerkstelligt werden, als wenn man sie von Anfang an mitverantwortlich machte. Es war auch keine Kleinigkeit, wenn man sich hinter der grünen Gardine des Ehebetts auf das Urteil der Tante Schnöbler, die Meinung des Bruder Stadtrats oder des Vetter Sackermanns berufen konnte - man trug die Verantwortlichkeit jedenfalls nicht gern allein. (B.A. 7/42-43)

The power of the group is also shown in the way in which old Hagebucher - and not only he - consistently takes the side of the group even against his own son every time a conflict develops, and is reflected in the many phrases, all of them expressing group solidarity, which characterise the philistines throughout the book.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the importance of the group also forces the individual into an inordinate attention to externals at the expense of fundamentals; he is more concerned with how things seem than with what they are really like. We have seen above how important this consideration is to old Hagebucher in the calling of the family council; it also

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16 Examples include the following: "keine Nippenburger Mutter", "nun wußte die Welt", "die wundervollen Illusionen, welche sich Nippenburg gemacht hatte" (B.A. 7/39), "der Goldene Pfau" (referring to its clientèle, B.A. 7/96), "man wollte ihn...ertappt haben" (B.A. 7/116), "es gab bereits viele Leute, welche..." (B.A. 7/273). (My emphasis).

plays a major part in his decision to get rid of his son (cf. B.A. 7/101). This emphasis on externals is one of the main features of the philistine's outlook on life and is one of the most constricting.

However obvious these characteristics may be, they do not, of themselves, provide conclusive enough evidence for us to state that by falling back on a sort of collective wisdom the philistines have necessarily shut themselves off from an appreciation of the fullness of reality; for although their passivity and lack of imagination would reinforce such a suggestion, it could be argued that a system of standards and values evolved from the accumulated wisdom of many generations could form a viable standpoint on which to base one's attitude to other people and the world. This argument may well be correct in general terms, but it does not quite cover the particular case of the philistines for, as Wolfgang Reuter has - I believe correctly - observed, the ebb and flow of ideas and experience which must always be present in the formation of such a corpus of accumulated wisdom seems to have dried up at some point with the culture of the philistines.<sup>17</sup> Instead of being a creative force, stimulating the imaginative energies of its adherents, it has become a rigid set of dogmas, static and closed to any further development.

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17 W. Reuter: "Die Bedeutung des Bürgerlichen bei Wilhelm Raabe" (Diss., Univ. of Freiburg, 1953), p.143: "Das Bürgerliche allein, so wesentlich es für die Allgemeinheit auch ist, führt den Menschen als Individuum, das er als Bürger immer bleiben soll, nie wesentlich weiter. Es erhält nur und bleibt, mehr stagnierend als agierend, in seinem engen Kreise. Es würde die Welt erstarren lassen, gäbe es nicht immer wieder treibende Kräfte außer ihm." Reuter is here talking about Raabe's late works, and in particular Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895), but leaving aside the question of "treibende Kräfte außer ihm", which Raabe only later develops convincingly, his summary represents accurately the position of the philistines as portrayed in Abu Telfan.



The vital aim and impetus have been lost, and only the lifeless skeleton - originally the superficial evidence of the force, not the force itself - remains. Far from providing a consistent but adaptable guide to life, taking account of the dynamic, developing movement of reality, the philistines' code of standards has degenerated into a brittle parody of the original, in which the essential spirit has disappeared. (This is a development which seems to apply to every, or practically every originally dynamic, thrusting movement as soon as it becomes established and institutionalised. If Raabe seems to stress it unfairly or unduly with particular regard to the culture of the philistines, this is in all probability merely a reflection of where his main interest lay at the time he was writing Abu Telfan).

What, then, is the system of values by which the philistines regulate their behaviour and which they use in their relationships to other people? What conception of reality do they draw from the code of standards I have just mentioned? In spite of what some critics have maintained,<sup>18</sup> I believe that Raabe considers the

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18 See, for example, Wilhelm Stapel: Deutsches Volkstum, 1.u.2. Raabehefte, 1921 and 1924; Georg Ullmann, *op.cit.*, *passim*; Roy Pascal: The German Novel, Manchester, 1956, pp.143-177. A completely divergent view is taken by Erich Weniger ("Wilhelm Raabe und das bürgerliche Leben", in Die Sammlung, 1951 pp.348-363 and 376-382, reprinted in Raabe in neuer Sicht, pp.74-97), and Karl Hoppe ("Wilhelm Raabe einst und heute", in Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft, 1961, pp.7-20, reprinted in Raabe in neuer Sicht, pp.173-184). Possibly the most accurate statement of Raabe's position is given in Hubert Ohl's article: "Eduards Heimkehr oder Le Vaillant und das Riesenfaultier. Zu Wilhelm Raabes Stopfkuchen", in Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft, 1964, pp.247-279. Ohl argues that the limitations of Raabe's starting-point (necessarily "bürgerlich") are in fact productive in that they allow Raabe to concentrate his gaze on one section of society, thus enabling him to become aware of and express the central dilemma of mid and late 19th-century German society more clearly than any other contemporary writer.



philistines' system of values to be founded on falsehoods, and that he sees the conception of reality which it encourages as misdirected, superficial and self-centred. What once had probably been a useful code of behaviour, playing its part in the formation of a cohesive society, has degenerated into a rigid, unbending set of rules and prejudices, stifling individual thought and initiative. The original strength of the group-consciousness so obvious in the philistines' outlook and behaviour has become its greatest weakness. It now represents a shift from individual responsibility, not into collective responsibility but into comfortable conformity. The power of the group idea (which in the case of old Hagebucher overrides even immediate family ties) is, in fact, one of the most dominant factors making for the stagnation and shortsightedness so evident in the philistines' view of things.

This interpretation is supported by the tortuous shifts which occur in the community's attitude towards Leonhard Hagebucher: the villagers of Nippenburg and Bumsdorf regard him in turn with excited curiosity, suspicious condescension, outright rejection and eventual respect. In the light of Hagebucher's life up to that point, of the alien aura surrounding him and of the contrast between his own situation and that of the rest of the community, it is not altogether surprising that some time should elapse before the community finally makes up its mind about him. This in itself is inevitable and could, given a more open-minded attitude, go a long way towards correcting unjustified prejudices acquired on first impressions, but the progression outlined here does not represent such a process of continuing and deepening acquaintance; rather the changes in attitude of the villagers are determined not by the sort

of man they find in Hagebucher but by whatever sort of man they wish to see in him at a particular time.<sup>19</sup> Although, as we shall see, Hagebucher does undergo some degree of inward development, this cannot account for the widely differing position he occupies from time to time in the eyes of his fellow-villagers. The truth of the matter is that the villagers' view of Hagebucher is essentially an emotionally and materially selfish one; it is based partly on a deeply-felt need to boost their own self-respect, if need be at the expense of Hagebucher, and partly on external circumstances irrelevant to his personal qualities.

For a considerable part of the novel, Hagebucher's main function as far as the villagers are concerned is that of an object on which to satisfy their emotional and psychological needs. Rather than take an interest in him for his own sake, they establish for themselves an image of his personality and proceed to take as much credit as possible out of it for themselves either through an association or through a favourable comparison with Hagebucher as they see him. So long as he is absent and can be regarded as a lost explorer, a martyr for civilisation, they draw pride and pleasure from identifying him with the local community; but after his return as a virtual pauper, they feel he has "let them down", and he rapidly becomes the victim of mockery and gossip, both of which

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19 The only exception to this is the fact that, by virtue of the challenge he represents, he brings on himself their almost undivided hostility.



enable the villagers to boost their own conceit and self-respect.<sup>20</sup> Here again we have an example of the group instinct among the philistine local community, and of the way any attempt at individual thought or action is completely rooted out. The villagers' self-respect, which had previously been enhanced by association with their imaginary picture of Hagebucher, is now maintained by establishing in their own minds a clear contrast between the real Hagebucher and themselves. In neither case is the picture an accurate one.

Quite apart, however, from the use of Hagebucher as a psychological prop, the criteria by which the villagers judge him are superficial and misdirected in the extreme. This is best illustrated by their reactions to the truth about his financial situation; under the immediate impression of his unexpected return, and assuming that Hagebucher has amassed a fortune during his years in Africa, they make him the object of their friendly wonderment and curiosity, but once their illusions in this respect have been shattered, his status is suddenly and drastically lowered; moreover, he is now considered unfit even to marry a local girl and make his home in the community.<sup>21</sup> Much later, however, the situation changes once more in his favour, this time as a result of a genuine improvement in his financial position; on the death of his father (an episode which Raabe manipulates in order to convey the essential absurdity of the values

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20 B.A. 7/96. In this connection it is highly significant that the communal hostility displayed towards the existence - and, presumably the implied challenge - of someone obviously different is portrayed in even starker terms in Raabe's next full-length novel, Der Schüdderump (1869). (See in particular the narrator's recreation of the villagers' unspoken thoughts regarding Tonie Häußler, B.A. 8/169-170).

21 B.A. 7/39.



of the philistine community), Hagebucher suddenly, and through no effort or desire of his own, becomes a man of property - and respectability.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, Hagebucher's personality has gone through several stages of development in the years since he left home, but it is obvious that these changes in his outlook and behaviour, his inward development, so to speak - which would seem to be the most relevant consideration in judging him as a human being - do not correspond at any point to the shifts in the attitude of the villagers. The local people are completely unaware of the patience and maturity which Hagebucher has gained as a result of his years of captivity, otherwise they would not treat him as an adolescent and insist that he should begin again at the point where he was twelve years previously; they are oblivious too to his increasing hardheadedness, a result of his progressive disillusionment with "civilised" European life and standards; and their changes of outlook regarding him do not reflect changes in the man himself, coming as they do during periods of comparative stability in his development, but merely changes in his outward circumstances.<sup>23</sup>

The villagers' view of Hagebucher is, then, distorted by irrelevant external criteria, and fails to achieve even a reasonable understanding of the man himself. As if this were not serious enough in itself, a further misleading element lies in the fact that the villagers themselves refuse to recognise the blatantly

22 B.A. 7/273.

23 Indeed, one of the "changes" in his circumstances is a totally imaginary one, so here we have a change of view unsubstantiated by any actual change, whether in character or even in outward circumstances.

materialist basis on which their judgments are founded. The condescending way in which Hagebucher is rehabilitated into respectable society is seen in the passage referred to above (B.A. 7/273), where the villagers (whose thoughts are contemptuously recreated by the narrator) decide to exercise "forgiveness" towards Hagebucher for the unnecessary annoyance caused by his "reappearance on the stage", and concede a certain element of "respectability" to him despite his undoubted "eccentricity". There is no mention here of the real reason for their change of heart, or rather, change of mind - money and wealth - and any blame which might be due is subtly shifted on to Hagebucher, so that the villagers can enjoy the pleasure and uplift afforded by a generous, forgiving heart. In the end, not only is their attitude to Hagebucher grossly distorted by misleading considerations - their own protective instincts and group-consciousness, and a system of values based solidly on materialist criteria - but even the roots of this distortion are not recognised; they are hidden away under a mass of hypocrisy or - as the language of the passage quoted above suggests - of semi-conscious, uncomfortable rationalisation. In the light of their basic approach, and of their unwillingness or inability even to acknowledge the source of their attitude, it is no wonder that the villagers' conclusions regarding Hagebucher are so wide of the mark. If, at the time he wrote Abu Telfan (1867), Raabe intended Nippenburg and Bumsdorf to typify many such closely-knit communities throughout Germany - and there is no reason to conclude that he did not - it seems clear that he is here disputing - some might say rejecting - the claims of such communities to give their adherents a valid, living insight into the nature of the world, and a guideline by which human relationships can be



established and regulated. What at first sight might appear to represent reality per se is, in fact, a distortion of reality, both by virtue of the retreat from individual experience and responsibility inherent in the villagers' group instincts and of the decayed standards of morality and judgment which the group itself perpetuates.

That is not to say, however, that in Abu Telfan Raabe denies without qualification the claims of a community such as that in Nippenburg. Such a conclusion would be altogether too sweeping; for although, as we shall see when we turn to Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) and Stopfkuchen (1889), Raabe's criticism of society becomes sharper and more convincing with the passing of the years, the condemnation it receives in Abu Telfan, heavy though it undoubtedly is, is by no means absolute. And while to illustrate the shortcomings and blindness of society we looked at the relationship of the social group to Leonhard Hagebucher, we must now change the perspective; to demonstrate the less negative aspect of Raabe's presentation of the community, I should like to comment briefly on the relationship of Hagebucher to the social group.

Hagebucher's attitude to the people of Nippenburg is indicative of Raabe's rather hesitating, undecided view of philistinism at the time he was writing Abu Telfan; whereas for the greater part of the book the world of the philistines is ironised and called in question by the figure of Hagebucher, it is finally accorded some degree of value by his eventual decision to live within the customary confines of village life.

In the initial stages the contrast between Hagebucher and the villagers could hardly be greater, and the appreciation of this



contrast is mutual: the village community seems almost as odd and fascinating to Hagebucher as he does to it. He is at this stage a complete outsider, collecting impressions and opinions much as a foreigner, coming to a strange country for the first time, would do.<sup>24</sup> At the end of the book, however, and particularly in the concluding Chapters, the picture is quite different. Indeed, in the final Chapter Hagebucher is described at one stage in terms strongly suggestive of an eventual accommodation with the very community which, in the meantime, he seemed to have rejected entirely. (B.A. 7/375)

In the light of what we have already seen concerning Hagebucher's relationship to his father, and of the father's character as such, it may seem astonishing that Hagebucher is here described in these terms, but two factors suggest that the transformation is not quite so abrupt as it seems. Firstly, we observe that Hagebucher at no point rejects the claims of the villagers out of hand. His attitude to them is more open-minded than theirs to him, so much so that even after being driven away from home, he still tries to see and

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24 See, for instance, the first description we are given of him on his arrival at Trieste (B.A. 7/7). His initially 'external' standpoint is emphasised in several places, among them the following passage: "Leonhard hatte wiederum Gelegenheit, sich in manchen Dingen zu orientieren, die ihm sehr neu erschienen, es aber keineswegs waren." (B.A. 7/63-64) A similar feeling is evident in his early conversations with Nikola. Despite the changes which take place in Hagebucher's outward behaviour and inward attitude in the course of the book, he is referred to throughout by the narrator in terms which suggest an actual foreigner: "der Afrikaner" (by far the most common term), "der Verwandte aus Abu Telfan", "der Mann aus Troglodytice", "der afrikanische Redner", "der Mann vom Mondgebirge", "der Siebenschläfer aus dem Tumurkielande", "der Freund aus dem Tumurkielande". These appellations, and others of a similar nature, are spread evenly throughout the novel.

appreciate his father's point of view.<sup>25</sup> His mind is not closed to the claims of those who have tried to force him to abandon his individuality in favour of their corporate way of life. Secondly, Raabe indicates here and there that, despite his outward rejection of village society, Hagebucher feels at heart that his roots may well lie there. On his return to the Residenz after the funeral of his father, for example, we find him pondering the complex situation into which he has been drawn, and wondering what course of action he should take. The narrator comments: „....als er endlich wirklich schlief, träumte er von einem warmen Schlafrocke, einem Paar wunderschöner, weicher Pantoffeln, einer langen Pfeife und einer singenden Teemaschine." (7/276) Here too we have a suggestion that the gulf between Hagebucher and the philistines is not as wide as it seems at first sight.

There is, therefore, some preparation, slight though it may be, for Hagebucher's seemingly contradictory conversion to philistinism, but this seems to lack any compelling motivation. Why, then, does Raabe make Hagebucher eventually align himself with the villagers and adopt, outwardly at least, their way of living? Three possible reasons spring to mind, and a clue lies in the remarkable passage in praise of philistinism which we find at the beginning of Chapter 35:

Ist das nicht ein wunderliches Ding im deutschen Land, daß überall die Katzenmühle liegen kann und liegt und Nippenburg rundumher sein Wesen hat und nie die eine ohne das andere gedacht werden kann? Ist das nicht ein wunderlich Ding, daß der Mann aus dem Tumurkielande, der Mann vom Mondgebirge nie ohne den Onkel und die Tante Schnöddler in die Erscheinung tritt? Wohin wir blicken, zieht stets und überall der germanische Genius ein Drittel seiner Kraft aus



dem Philistertum und wird von dem alten Riesen, dem Gedanken, mit welchem er ringt, in den Lüften schwebend erdrückt, wenn es ihm nicht gelingt, zur rechten Zeit wieder den Boden, aus dem er erwuchs, zu berühren. (B.A. 7/357)

After mentioning by way of contrast „die Sonntagskinder anderer Völker“, the narrator continues:

Sie säen und sie spinnen alle, die hohen Männer, welche u n s durch die Zeiten voraufschreiten, sie kommen alle aus Nippenburg, wie sie Namen haben: Luther, Goethe, Jean Paul, und sie schämen sich ihres Herkommens auch keineswegs, zeigen gern ein behagliches Verständnis für die Werkstatt, die Schreibstube und die Ratsstube; und selbst Friedrich von Schiller, der doch von allen unsern geistigen Helden vielleicht am schroffsten mit Nippenburg und Bumsdorf brach, fühlt doch von Zeit zu Zeit das herzliche Bedürfnis, sich von einem früheren Kanzlei- und Stammverwandten grüßen und mit einem biedern „Weischt“ an alte natürlich-vertrauliche Verhältnisse erinnern zu lassen. (B.A. 7/357)

The seemingly fundamental opposition which we noted earlier between the outsider and the culture of the philistines is here done away with. Raabe indicates that coexistence between the two is not only possible but essential if the human race is to survive and prosper. The philistine system can claim some justification because it forms part (though only part) of the wholeness of humanity, and because in practice it has produced many great men who have profited from its advantages without being inhibited by its limitations. (In view of this attitude, the conclusion of the passage in praise of philistinism - B.A. 7/358-59 - is perhaps not so absurd and out of place as it might otherwise seem). Whether Raabe's argument at this point is a sound one or not, and whether it really deals with the essence of philistinism as we saw it earlier



in this Chapter, is debatable,<sup>26</sup> but there is no doubt that it represents one of the main reasons why he makes Hagebucher abandon his hitherto sceptical, even contemptuous attitude towards the village community.

Such an argument is capable of a wider, even of a general application, but the two other possible factors determining Hagebucher's change of heart arise more from his personal situation than from questions affecting the fundamental nature of human society. It may be, for example, that, as I suggested above, Hagebucher has simply come to realise that his roots lie in the village community, and that he prefers integration into it to a life of lonely independence.<sup>27</sup> Or (more significantly from the point of view of Raabe's later development) we can take the view that no other way out is open to Hagebucher. Despite all his efforts and much soul-searching, he can find no convincing alternative to society as it is, nor are we presented with any such alternative at any point in the novel. The only possibility of a different yet viable approach to life is represented by the figure of Frau ~~Kaludine~~<sup>Kalandine</sup> Fehleysen, but although Hagebucher at first hopefully and optimistically embraces her view of life, he later concludes, despite his great personal admiration for her, that it offers no help in the face of the immediate and often complex problems of human relationships besetting the majority of ordinary men and women at some time

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26 Georg Lukacs, for example, argues strongly that it does not (Lukacs, op. cit., pp.255-56).

27 That this is, however, also capable of a wider application, is clear from the reference to Schiller in the passage quoted above.

or another.<sup>28</sup> As a key to unlock the mysteries of reality and shed light on the character and personality of other people, Frau Klaudine's approach to life is as great a failure, although for quite different reasons, as that of the philistines.

For these reasons, then, - the necessity of coexistence between the individual and the social group, the fear of loneliness and isolation, and the lack of a viable alternative way of life - Raabe makes Hagebucher revert finally, at least as far as outward appearances are concerned, to the ways of his father and his fellow-villagers.<sup>29</sup> In spite of this apparent accommodation with philistinism, however, Raabe's position at the end of Abu Telfan remains to some degree hesitant and ambiguous; and the ambiguity we see here is not the studied balance and subtle manoeuvring of his most mature works, but

28 Both Hagebucher's private thoughts (conveyed, B.A. 7/275-76) and his ultimately open rejection of the Katzenmühle (B.A. 7/382) afford concrete support for this point of view.

29 Stanley Radcliffe suggests that Hagebucher's reversion to a socially acceptable way of life is a mere possibility rather than a verifiable development: "...Raabe seems to be implying that these are only possibilities that lie open to Hagebucher, and that he will not necessarily fall prey to them." (Radcliffe, op. cit., p.187). A similar view is taken by Hermann Pongs, who speaks of an "Abschluss ins Offene" (H. Pongs: Wilhelm Raabe. Leben und Werk, Heidelberg, 1958, p.265); and in his article on Stopfkuchen, Hubert Ohl goes even farther, suggesting that Hagebucher can and should be seen as "ein 'wesentlicher' Mensch" in a corrupt, barbaric society, someone who, in contrast to the narrator in Stopfkuchen, is not overcome by the pressures of social conformism. (H. Ohl, op. cit., pp.272-73). It seems to me, however, that Raabe could hardly have chosen a clearer method of illustrating Hagebucher's eventual accommodation with the values of the local community than the one he adopts here - showing us the former outcast, the prodigal son, now bearing all the outward features - dress, pipe and gait - of the archetypal philistine his father had represented. It seems more straightforward, as well as more consistent with the general tenor of the closing Chapters of the novel, to regard this as the outward reflection of a parallel inner development.

is rather the result both of the unhappy marriage of the last two Chapters with the rest of the book, and of the fact that Raabe at this time had not finally settled his own view of philistinism. The last two Chapters were deliberately and consciously added by Raabe, and so must be taken into account, but the change in attitude which they invoke is too drastic and sudden to be convincing, and previous pointers to Hagebucher's change of heart, although certainly present, are few and slight. The criticism levelled at the culture of the philistines in the foregoing thirty-four Chapters cannot - in view of its considerable intensity and evident conviction - be annulled or even greatly reduced in effect by the contrast of the last two. Despite a muddled though probably well-meant effort to do justice to all sides, the criticisms which Raabe originally levelled at the philistine system stand virtually unchanged. Although his over-all treatment of the topic is not altogether satisfactory, Raabe's depiction in Abu Telfan of philistinism as an escape from reality constitutes an important element in the intention of the novel as a whole; as such it represents a significant stage in his development of the concepts of reality and illusion.<sup>30</sup>

(ii) Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895)

If the significance of Abu Telfan (1867) - as far as this study is concerned - lies in the fact that it demonstrates the first developments in Raabe away from a simplistic, rather casual approach to society towards a more committed, more deeply pondered attitude, then Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) occupies no less important a place in this, for Raabe, crucially important scheme of things. It is the last completed novel in which Raabe addresses himself to the



problem of society and its claims upon the individual, and (although the construction of this study might seem to suggest otherwise) it expresses his final position on this question. (In using the word "final" in this context, I do not, of course, wish to indicate that there is anything dogmatic in the way Raabe examines social values in Die Akten des Vogelsangs - indeed, I hope to show that the opposite

30 A different view is taken by Barker Fairley (Wilhelm Raabe. An introduction to his novels. Oxford, 1961) In his discussion of Abu Telfan, (pp.166-171), he argues that the book is very promising up to Chapter six, but thereafter represents "a tale of opportunities missed or bungled" if Raabe (as Fairley assumes) was attempting "to take stock of the age". (p.166) He considers that "the privacy and quietism of the Katzenmühle (take) charge of the book and (remove) it out of the socio-political sphere altogether", (p.168) and that the "solemn undertone" which prevails throughout (p.170) makes it impossible to interpret the book in terms of satire or irony. In view of this he concludes that Raabe was far too deeply committed by his innermost nature to the common life around him ever to detach himself from it successfully and view it judicially from an outside position. There are several objections to such a conclusion. Unsatisfactory though Abu Telfan may be from certain points of view, this does not really affect the issue of Raabe's attitude to the society he depicts; any failure is one of execution, not of intention. Secondly, the Katzenmühle is not the governing force in the novel; as we have already seen, the outlook and way of life of Frau Klaudine are eventually rejected. (The attention given to the Katzenmühle does, however, weaken the impact of the social and political criticism to some extent). Thirdly, although there may be a "solemn undertone" at some points in the book, this is by no means the only mood which it conveys. The portrayal of the villagers is humorous and on many occasions ironical, and if at the end of the book, Hagebucher "behaves more like a discredited clergyman than as the man who learned wisdom in Africa" (p.167), this too, I submit, simply reflects the critical, ironic approach which Raabe adopts to him as well. Finally, when Fairley concludes from the eventual "failure" of Hagebucher that Raabe has been unable ever to detach himself from the world with which his hero now allies himself, he overlooks the fact, which I mentioned earlier, that Hagebucher only takes this step very reluctantly, because no better way seems open to him. It is not that Raabe was unable to look at philistinism from the outside; rather that having in Abu Telfan taken a deliberate and critical look at it, he decides, while all the time maintaining the validity of his criticisms, that it is the lesser of two evils for the individual, for want of a better alternative, to come to terms with it as best he can. For these four reasons, I hold to my original view that Raabe has indeed detached himself from the society he depicts in Abu Telfan and that his basic conclusion concerning it is that a general acceptance of its values and assumptions is certain to cut the individual off from an appreciation of many important facets of reality.

is the case; I mean simply that it represents a point of view regarding society at which Raabe had arrived after a lifetime of wrestling with the problem,<sup>31</sup> and which he did not subsequently modify, at least not publicly).

This being the case, the question arises whether the type of society that Raabe depicts here is fundamentally the same as that in Abu Telfan, and, more important, whether his judgment on society has been modified in any way. The answers to these questions will, I hope, emerge in the course of this Chapter. In particular, the answer to the second question will depend to a large extent on the answer to the first. I should like, therefore, to approach the problem as a whole by asking first of all: is the society depicted in Die Akten des Vogelsangs the same type of society as we saw in Abu Telfan?

Superficially, the two situations seem to have much in common. Certain parallels could be drawn between on the one hand the relationship of Leonhard Hagebucher to the Nippenburg community and on the other that of the Andres family (and in particular Velten Andres) to the community represented preeminently by Karl Krumhardt's father. In both cases the principal outsider returns to the place of his upbringing after several years spent in far-off lands only to encounter curiosity, bewilderment and some degree of contempt; and we note too the same challenge to bourgeois values, met by a stern, unyielding attitude on the part of the majority in the community. Despite these tempting similarities, however, the situations

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<sup>31</sup> Further illustrations of Raabe's preoccupation with society and social values are dealt with briefly in the concluding part of this Chapter.



portrayed are by no means identical. In contrast to the case of Leonhard Hagebucher, for instance, the misunderstanding encountered by Velten Andres after his return from America is only partially the result of his fellow citizens' innate inability to understand someone such as himself; it is also in large measure something which he brings on himself by his refusal to speak about his past experiences or to allow any conversation to develop beyond the level of the most banal platitudes.<sup>32</sup> Secondly, and more important at this point, the community against which the outsider is pitted in Die Akten des Vogelsangs is by no means as unquestioning and monolithic as it had been in the earlier work. Whereas in Abu Telfan the main stress-situation is constructed around the tension between the outsider and society as a whole (the various stresses within the social framework, although noted by Raabe, do not occupy a central or even a very significant place in the novel), in Die Akten des Vogelsangs we are faced with two foci of interest of like importance - the struggle between the outsider and society (as in Abu Telfan) and the equally significant, although more predictable struggle between established values and ways of life, and new shifting currents and trends within the community. The tension between the outsider and society will occupy our interest for the greater part of this examination; for a moment, however, I should like to turn my

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32 See, for example, B.A. 19/350, where this aspect of Velten's behaviour is particularly clearly highlighted. It is noteworthy too that Raabe seems much more interested in Velten as a character in his own right than he is in Leonhard Hagebucher. His interest, in Die Akten des Vogelsangs, extends beyond a mere analysis of social outlooks and behaviour and is concerned just as much with the figure of the outsider, who is now no longer used simply as a stick with which to beat the representatives of conventional social morality.



attention to the struggle within the framework of society between old and new, as the implications arising from this struggle reflect important factors concerning Raabe's judgment of society in Die Akten des Vogelsangs.

Most of the changes in the Vogelsang which Karl Krumhardt records are physical changes, palpable matters of fact, and, considering Krumhardt's temperament and general outlook, this is not surprising.<sup>33</sup> Behind the material aspect of these changes, however, we come gradually to suspect that deeper issues are involved. The constant alterations in the environment go hand in hand with and reflect parallel developments in the way of life and system of values of the community, and bring before us an old society which, for all its limitations, formed a genuine and warm-hearted community, but which is now disintegrating. Raabe's choice of title is fitting, as the novel records the history of the once-self-contained community from a state of apparently unthreatened stability to the final disappearance, under the pressure of rapid industrialisation, of the community as it once was. The development is one from integration through disruption to total

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<sup>33</sup> See below, especially pp.67-68 of this study, regarding Krumhardt's assumption of the superiority of facts and figures over intuition.

fragmentation:<sup>34</sup> an organic, homogeneous community is challenged, penetrated and finally overcome by foreign elements; the openness and natural growth which had previously characterised the Vogelsang give way to isolated enclosed sections sealed off by brick and concrete;<sup>35</sup> the formerly abounding garden hedges, symbols of neighbourly concern and communication, are replaced by high, fire-proof walls, shutting off one unit from another; personal contact gives way to impersonal isolation; and the new society, far from finding satisfaction in communal giving and taking, craves it, for the most part unsuccessfully, in individual self-advancement.<sup>36</sup>

34. Krumhardt's deeply felt regret at the side-effects of the developments in which he has acquiesced is expressed in general terms near the beginning of the narrative (B.A. 19/218-19). On the more detailed level we are told, amongst other things, of a factory erected in Hartleben's ground after his death (one of the reasons why the Krumhardt family moves out of the district), of four-storey blocks of flats where Hartleben's house had once stood, of how Frau Andres' house (which is itself eventually demolished) seems a laughable anachronism among the new creations of brick and stone, and of how, when the site is finally levelled, it is regarded no longer as the place where a family once lived, but simply as „der ‚neue Bauplatz‘, einer der besten im neuen Vogelsang.” (B.A. 19/384) Krumhardt certainly expresses the truth of the situation when he describes his record as „(diese) Annalen und Historien des alten Vogelsangs.” (B.A. 19/384) (My emphases).

35 Raabe reflects this development (perhaps rather crudely) by making the Krumhardt family move house from the Grüne Gasse (in the old Vogelsang) to the Archivstraße (in the Residenz). One of the most significant symptoms of this process, reflecting as it does the progressive disintegration of the ties of continuity in the community, is the way in which the local cemetery is finally sealed off from the children of the area (B.A. 19/240, 367).

36 So dehumanising is the frenetic race for self-advancement that the authorities are eventually obliged to build (!) a mental hospital near to the Osterberg (the symbol of the peace, purpose and unity of the old way of life). Raabe's reason for insisting on such a geographical location for the hospital is unmistakable.



This is the position as we have it at the end of Krumhardt's narrative; the transformation of the old system of society has been more or less completed. But much of what Krumhardt has to tell us concerns the transitional period, when the two forms of society had existed side by side. The community he describes there is in a state of flux.<sup>37</sup> Its failure to come to terms with the new and growing materialist pressures has led to a waning of confidence and a sense of lost direction; the previously unquestioned assumptions upon which it was based now seem less self-evident. This is obviously very different from the situation in Abu Telfan, where the limited nature of the social perspective is nowhere appreciated by the adherents of the dominant social group.<sup>38</sup> In Die Akten des Vogelsangs as well we meet, needless to say, several characters - we think immediately of old Krumhardt and Anna - whose faith in the given social ethos remains basically unshaken, but a new spirit of doubt from within, as yet expressed only in muted form and unrecognised in many quarters, is beginning to assert itself. This gnawing self-doubt - totally absent in Abu Telfan - is central to Raabe's presentation of society in Die Akten des Vogelsangs, for

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37 As he grew older, Raabe, influenced no doubt by the growing feeling of insecurity characteristic of his times, portrayed such a society more and more frequently. (Obvious examples include Horacker (1875) and Meister Autor (1873), as well as Pfisters Mühle (1884), where he deals with the nowadays even more pressing problem of environmental pollution). The main differences between these works and the Akten (1895) consist in or can be traced back to the almost unique position which Karl Krumhardt occupies as narrator in the latter novel. This topic is discussed below, pp.51-53 of this study.

38 See pp.27-32 and 36-38 of this Study.



whereas in Abu Telfan he had poked fun at society and satirised its erring ways from the sovereign standpoint of a detached and omniscient observer, he now admits the strictly limited nature of any human perspective (including that of society) on a much deeper level, firstly by offering us an expressly subjective view of things by his use of a first-person narrator,<sup>39</sup> and secondly by endowing (or burdening) that narrator - Karl Krumhardt - with recurring doubts as to the truth of his own vision. In place, then, of a seemingly omniscient narrator unmasking, as it were, a self-satisfied, apparently stable society, we are confronted here with an uncertain, restricted narrator, himself in some ways representative of the society of his time, attempting, not always successfully, to answer nagging questions about his own and other people's way of life.

The choice of Karl Krumhardt as narrator, then, and the sort of personality with which Raabe invests him, are vitally important to any consideration of Raabe's depiction of social values in Die Akten des Vogelsangs. Far from letting him be merely a cypher of society or a convenient foil for the rebellious Velten Andres, Raabe gives Krumhardt an independent part in the constellation of events and the interaction of characters which he relates. It can moreover be claimed with some justification that his role in the novel (quite

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39 Raabe's use of the first-person narrator in the Akten has been analysed in the two excellent studies by Hermann Helmers quoted above (see p.18, Note 3). It is noteworthy that Raabe "plays by the rules" in this context, that is, he does not allow Krumhardt to take advantage of any knowledge which he could not reasonably have acquired in the normal course of events. Above all, there is no question of his ever reading Velten's mind or telling us his unspoken thoughts; in such cases, all he is able to do is speculate.



apart from the mechanical one of narration) is at least as important as that of Velten Andres,<sup>40</sup> and it is from this conviction that the greater part of my remaining examination of Raabe's critique of society will concentrate not on the (to many people more attractive) figure of Velten but on Krumhardt himself. Indeed, it seems to me that the second and basically more important topic for consideration - Raabe's commentary on the limitations of the social perspective - is best approached (with Krumhardt in the centre of things for the most part) under the following headings: firstly, the possibility of self-fulfilment within the conformist life as represented by Krumhardt; secondly, the attempt of Krumhardt, the orthodox man, to achieve an understanding of Velten Andres, and the results of this attempt; and finally, the degree of mutual understanding between Velten Andres and the people with whom he comes into contact in the course of the novel.

The significance of Krumhardt's position as narrator stretches beyond the fact that it enables Raabe to express the sceptical spirit of a transitional generation. The masterly form which Raabe has

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40 The creative (and ultimately unresolved) tension between the worlds of Krumhardt and Velten, and the deliberate equilibrium which Raabe sustains throughout the novel (see below, pp. 75-77) would be impossible if the figure of Krumhardt were not given as significant and weighty a role as that of his more mysterious friend, and if the persuasive influence of Krumhardt were removed, we should be left rather with a grotesque account of the adventures of an unstable individualist such as we are offered in *Wunnigel* (1876) (although, as I hope to show in the following Chapter, that novel too merits careful individual consideration). The significance attached by Raabe to the figure of Krumhardt has been recognised and assessed by several critics, notably Roy Pascal: ("The reminiscence technique in Raabe", *M.L.R.*, 1954, pp. 339-48 and *The German Novel*, quoted earlier), Herman Meyer (*Der Sonderling in der deutschen Dichtung*, München, 1963), Wolfgang Reuter ("Die Bedeutung des Bürgerlichen bei Wilhelm Raabe", quoted earlier) and, more recently, Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz ("The tailor and the sweeper...").



evolved in Die Akten des Vogelsangs not only offers us several points of view (whether in confirmation or contradiction) regarding many of the characters and events;<sup>41</sup> it also shows us, as it were, two different Krumhardts. In the narrated time we see him as he was up to the death of Velten Andres, whereas the narrative time offers us a picture of him as he is "now", in the "present"; and Krumhardt's relationship and response to Velten can be broken up on similar lines: the degree of self-fulfilment which he achieves (reflected in the unconscious confrontation with Velten) is portrayed for the most part in the past events and times which he records (narrated time), while his conscious attempt to come to terms with Velten and the values he stands for takes place only in the "present" (narrative time).<sup>42</sup> With this in mind, I should now like to look more closely at the level of self-fulfilment achieved by Krumhardt, the most carefully and thoroughly characterised representative of conventional values in the novel.

On the face of it, Krumhardt's background and the kind of life

41 We see many events (such as Velten's student days in Berlin, and his final return to Frau Feucht; the mock immolation in Hartleben's hut; and Velten's departure for America) through the eyes of several characters (though not necessarily at the same point in the narrative). Of course, most of what we are told is seen, principally at least, through Krumhardt's eyes, and he has, as he himself admits (B.A. 19/253) the power to relate or suppress whatever he thinks fit.

42 This division is, of course, by no means absolute, although it does have general validity. While Velten was alive, Krumhardt must have asked himself at times what made his friend so different from everyone else in the community (although this questioning does not seem to have been either concentrated or sustained); and, as we shall see (pp. 64-66 of this study), the fascination which Velten had exercised over Krumhardt at that time reasserts itself at one point during the actual writing of the narrative.



he leads seem such as to provide most people with a reasonably sustained level of contentment, if not with the peaks of passion enjoyed by those of a more individualist temperament. Krumhardt, the son of humble but respected conventional members of society,<sup>43</sup> fulfils more than adequately the expectations of parents and neighbours.<sup>44</sup> Despite occasional lapses he is, for the most part, a model child (indeed, old Hartleben tells Frau Andres on one occasion that Krumhardt is the only member of their youthful gang whom he has not had to take in hand physically); unlike the more gifted but (at this point) less disciplined Velten, he passes the Abitur at the first attempt; his university examinations hold few terrors, and his ascent within the state administration to the rank of Oberregierungsrat is as smooth as it seems inevitable;<sup>45</sup> he is almost universally liked and respected and has made a happy marriage with a girl from one of the best families in the town. At least up to the point of Velten's death, he adheres to his father's values, which he at no point seriously calls in question. Near the beginning of his reminiscences,

43 B.A. 19/217

44 There is more than a grain of truth in Velten's assertion that Krumhardt's study of philosophy was thus motivated: "...frage nur Freund Krumhardt danach, der sich des bürgerlichen Anstands wegen, sein Teil davon (i.e. of philosophy) hat in die Feder diktieren lassen." (B.A. 19/329)

45 It is interesting to note how Krumhardt himself seems to take this for granted, and how this is reflected in the way he speaks about his career and achievements. The following passage is typical: "Also, wie gesagt, ich ließ ihn in Berlin, bestand zu Hause ehrenvoll, und wie es mein Vater auch gar nicht anders erwartet hatte, mein erstes juristisches Examen, wurde der nächsten Behörde, die eine Lücke für mich aufzuweisen hatte, als rechtskundiger Katechumene zugeteilt, entsprach den Anforderungen meiner Vorgesetzten und sah, wie mein Papa, dem zweiten 'stärkern Licht', das heißt der nächsten Prüfung, mit nicht ungerechtfertigtem Vertrauen entgegen." (B.A. 19/296-97)

and before he has really begun to adjust his perspective in order to take account more fully of Velten's view of things, he summarises the general trend of his life thus:

Dieses (the "fact" that his parents' outlook on life was the correct one) konnte sie nur darin bestärken, ihr eigen Fleisch und Blut möglichst auf dem richtigen Wege zu erhalten, auf daß und damit die Welt bestehe und ordnungsgemäß an nachfolgende Geschlechter weitergegeben werde. Nach besten, treuesten, sorglichsten Kräften haben sie so an mir getan, und - gottlob, ich weiß, daß meine Frau und meine Kinder mit ihren Erziehungsresultaten zufrieden sind.<sup>46</sup>

Outwardly at least, Krumhardt in no way deviates from the norms of conventional society and, during the period under discussion, he never expressly questions the rightness of his position.<sup>47</sup>

What really concerns us here, however, is the question: does this way of life bring Krumhardt genuine self-fulfilment? Does his outer contentment reflect a similar inward attitude of mind? Or, to formulate the question in rather more general terms, is Raabe now rejecting the view he seemed to hold so strongly in Abu Telfan, and suggesting instead that a life lived in accord with the demands of social conformity can encourage insight and bring fulfilment? During the period covered by Krumhardt's record, we are given only one explicit clue on this subject. One afternoon, while sitting on

<sup>46</sup> B.A. 19/239-40. Despite the fact that Krumhardt claims to have been influenced to some degree by the life of Velten's father (whom he scarcely knew) (B.A. 19/221), the overriding and by far the most durable influence on him is the upbringing he has received from his own father. We feel more inclined to agree when he talks of himself as "ich, der ich mehr als ein anderer ... von den Vorzügen des alten Herrn Kenntnis hatte und überzeugt war,..." (B.A. 19/341).

<sup>47</sup> The situation is, of course, different once Krumhardt begins his narrative; for the time being we are concerned only with the events as he describes them, not with the reaction which the act of writing and recall provokes in him.



the slopes of the Osterberg, Velten notices shooting-stars in the sky. (According to traditional belief, the shooting-stars - „die Tränen des heiligen Laurentius“ - grant each person who sees them one wish). Velten, Helene and Karl all make wishes according to their character,<sup>48</sup> and the extent of Krumhardt's yearning turns out to be - the desire to succeed in the forthcoming Abitur examinations!<sup>49</sup> On the basis of this wish - the only time when Krumhardt specifies the nature of his ambition - we could easily conclude that, as far as his personality is concerned, this is the end of the matter; that he is and always will be quite contented to live according to the clearly defined guidelines which he has accepted from society, and in particular from his father; that, in fact, his horizon is an exclusively social one, which can never encompass the yearning or longing of a more imaginative nature. On the conscious level, this conclusion is certainly justified; at no point does Krumhardt express, even to himself, a wish for something above and beyond what he has been brought up to consider desirable. But one outstanding aspect of his behaviour - traceable at intervals throughout the whole period of his narrative - forces us to reappraise our point of view on this question. This disturbing factor is the curious fascination which Krumhardt seems to feel for the figure of Velten, a fascination which ultimately forces him to look beyond the limits of his social orientation, and which asserts itself particularly strongly at three points in his life.

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48 Helene's and Velten's wishes are recorded on B.A. 19/259 and 260-61 respectively.

49 B.A. 19/259.



Even as a schoolboy, Krumhardt had often played the role of reluctant but powerless follower to Velten's foolhardy but imaginative leader. (The mock immolation in Hartleben's hut is probably the most obvious example). Although he "knows" that such escapades are "senseless" and "pointless" (to use his father's words), he takes part in them because of something in Velten's character which leads him on irresistibly. Speaking later of the discipline which his father had imposed (and which he had accepted most of the time), he adds:

Mit welchem Verdruss, Trotz und mehr oder weniger deutlichen Widerstreben habe ich zu jenen Zeiten ... jenen guten Griff erduldet! Und wie oft habe ich mich von ihm frei gemacht und bin mit den beiden anderen durchgegangen im Vogelsange in den Vogelsang und auf den Osterberg, aus der Niederung zu den Höhen, aus dem Alltag in den Sonntag, aus der griechischen und lateinischen Grammatik in die Tausendundeine Nacht, aus Vegas Logarithmen, aus der Mathematik und Arithmetik in die wirkliche Idealität von Zeit und Raum, in das raum- und zeitlose Jugendphantasiereich von Velten Andres und Helene Trotzendorff! (B.A. 19/254)

After leaving school, he is free from Velten's influence for one year, as Velten, having failed the mathematics (!) section of the Abitur, remains at home in order to gain the qualification the following year. When, however, Velten eventually joins him as a student in Berlin, the spell which he had (apparently involuntarily) cast over him exercises its power for the second time. Looking back over that period in his life, Krumhardt characterises it in a way which makes clear both the unbridgeable cleavage in outlook and temperament between Velten and the "sensible" representatives of normal society, and the complete powerlessness which he had felt - and still feels - when confronted with the enigmatic beckoning of his boyhood friend. He writes:

Ich war natürlich auch nach Berlin bloß des Studierens

wegen gekommen. Damit wurde es diesmal gar nichts. Die schlimmsten Befürchtungen meines armen Vaters trafen ein; ich verfiel für die nächste Zeit wieder vollständig dem Verderben, das nach der Meinung aller Verständigen in der Heimat von dem Freunde ausging. Ich hatte ihn wieder, und er hatte mich wieder am Kragen,... (B.A. 19/280)

During this time, the romantic, unworldly alliance of Velten, his landlady Frau Feucht, and the des Beaux family gains such a dominant influence over Krumhardt that the foundations of behaviour which his father had so painstakingly inculcated seem in danger of being undermined entirely. Most striking of all, however, and with this we pass to the third point in Krumhardt's life where Velten's influence becomes overwhelming, is Krumhardt's reaction when his friend undertakes his „großes Aufräumen" - the burning of every piece of property which had belonged to his family and which still held any value for him. This action mystifies and outrages the majority of Velten's neighbours; in particular Anna Krumhardt and his own housekeeper Riekchen Schellenbaum find it shocking, even immoral. But Krumhardt reacts in quite a different fashion. Once again he is overwhelmed by a gripping fascination for Velten and what he is doing. The spell is once again unbreakable, and Krumhardt is unable to resist, despite recurring feelings of guilt concerning his own involvement in the auto-da-fé, as he calls it:

Ich wehrte mich vergebens gegen das Interesse, das ich von Tag zu Tage mehr an dem seltsamen Zerstörungswerk nahm. Meinem Weibe gegenüber den abscheulichen, den „unsinnigen Menschen" noch zu rechtfertigen, hatte ich bald aufgegeben, aber bald auch wär's nötig geworden, daß ich mich nur noch verstohlen vom Hause nach dem Vogelsang weggeschlichen hätte. (B.A. 19/271)

For a whole winter, a senior civil servant feels compelled to seek out a boyhood friend who, according to all acceptable standards, has regrettably failed to make anything out of his abundant natural



talents, and who now enlists the help of his distinguished friend to gather together piece by piece all his worldly goods before reducing them to ashes. Small wonder that Krumhardt speaks of the „Zauber, der ... mich jeden Tag nach der alten Heimstätte trieb, die jetzt zu einer Stätte der Vernichtung geworden war." (B.A. 19/271) While it lasts, the influence of Velten over Krumhardt is intense and overwhelming; after his return from America it threatens to change Krumhardt's behaviour and way of life entirely. It is certainly not without reason that Anna Krumhardt feels her husband is being changed into a completely different person; even her dream that he has burned a photograph of her and their baby son (on the same lines as Velten's „großes Aufräumen") is not so fantastic as it might be under different circumstances.

There is, then, an undeniable conflict within Krumhardt. Although the general tendency of his outlook and way of life is towards conformity and acceptance of social values, he feels irresistibly drawn, at certain times, to something quite different, to the individualist, the irrational, the imaginative and emotional side of life. And this is, I believe, the significance of the influence which Velten exercises over him: he senses in Velten (although, like many other things, he does not realise the truth of this until he attempts to set it down on paper), these qualities I have just listed, qualities which he himself either lacks or possesses in very small measure. It is as if he were in some way aware that the standards to which he has been brought up, valuable though they may be in some respects, cannot do justice to the wholeness of life; that there is another realm of existence, equally valid, which the

social perspective does not or cannot take into account;<sup>50</sup> and that he can, as it were, compensate for his shortcomings in this direction by attaching himself as closely as possible to someone who epitomises the very insights and qualities he himself lacks. In addition, it seems to me that Raabe is here inviting the reader to draw explicitly these conclusions, which Krumhardt is at this point unable to formulate consciously.

This is not to say, however, that the periods when Krumhardt is subject to the influence of Velten represent a conscious attempt on Krumhardt's part to see things from Velten's point of view, or to come to terms with or even accept the possible validity of his way of looking at the world. Such a development arises only when, after Velten's death, Krumhardt tries to express on paper the essence of Velten's personality and of their childhood in the *Vogelsang*, and thereby does his best to see things from Velten's as well as his own point of view. For the time being he does not even feel the need to question his own way of life, otherwise he would not revert to normalcy as soon as the immediate stimulus to unconventional behaviour - the presence of Velten - is removed. The attraction which he feels towards Velten, far from representing any general conscious acceptance of the imaginative perspective, is basically a succumbing (for reasons which he does not appreciate at the time) to

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50 This suggestion is supported from another point of view: when Velten receives a letter from Helene, he refuses to let Krumhardt read it, on the grounds that he would not have the imagination necessary to understand what Helene was really trying to say, and that he would misconstrue the whole tone of the letter: „Nein! Man muß zuviel zwischen den Zeilen lesen. Was könnt ihr davon wissen? Du gar nichts, Karl; - vielleicht noch eher etwas der Träumer Leon da.“ (B.A. 19/301)



the personal magnetism of someone who has in abundance qualities which he himself lacks and does not really understand.<sup>51</sup> Despite this, however, the importance for our purposes of the fascination and influence which Velten exerts on Krumhardt should not be underestimated. The insufficiency of the social perspective in the case of Krumhardt is a fact from the beginning, even if he himself is unaware of it until a much later date. The spell which Velten casts over him is indeed evidence that Krumhardt feels in some way unfulfilled by the conventional life he is leading; when Velten is there he senses, in a way that he does not really understand, that his own view of things lacks insight into the less easily calculable aspects of life, and he would like, if only he dared, to see whether the truth about life did, after all, lie in another direction.<sup>52</sup>

His eventual confrontation with the extra-social world lies, however, in the field of reflection rather than of personal

51 As I have just suggested, this is seen in the fact that Krumhardt, although certainly under the spell of Velten for long periods, reverts to normal behaviour as soon as the physical presence of Velten is removed. He himself is aware of the conflicting influences on him and expresses the effect they have on him at several points in the novel. As he himself admits, he can never reject, or indeed fully accept one direction, ignoring the other. (cf. B.A. 19/274, 312)

52 There are only two indications during the narrated time of any realisation on Krumhardt's part of the insecurity of existence. In conversation with Helene after Velten's death he twice speaks (apparently seriously) of "die wankende Erde" (B.A. 19/404 and 407). More striking, however, are his comments on what he felt after Velten had warned him that he was storing up trouble and worry for his children: ".....ich...habe oft, oft an seinen Blick und die begleitende Bewegung mit der lahmen Linken damals denken müssen, und jedesmal waren dann meine vier sicheren Wände drohend, beängstigend auf mich eingerückt, es war mir bänglich und asthmatisch zumute geworden, ich traute auch dem zierlichen Stuck des Plafonds nicht; ja, ich fühlte mich dann jedesmal recht unbehaglich in meinen vier Pfählen und im Erdenleben überhaupt." (B.A. 19/365-66).

experience, trial and error. It is when he begins to record for the family archives the history of the Vogelsang, and in particular the lives of Velten, Helene Trotzendorff and himself, that he is forced for the first time to ask searching questions as to the sufficiency and validity of his own way of life and to weigh it, dispassionately if possible, against the merits of the road which Velten chose. (For there can be no doubt that whatever personal fascination Velten may exert by virtue of his highly imaginative disposition, he is just as important, in terms of the novel as a whole, in his capacity as, so to speak, a voluntary outsider, a challenger, a socially untypical individual). It is with this leap, formally speaking, from the narrated time into the narrative time that I should like to pass from a consideration of the lack of fulfilment experienced by Krumhardt to the second main heading by which I wish to illustrate Raabe's portrayal of the limitations of the social perspective in Die Akten des Vogelsangs: the attempt of Krumhardt, the orthodox man, to arrive at an understanding of Velten, and the results of this attempt.

We have already seen that Velten's influence over Krumhardt, although intense, is episodic and entirely dependent on the physical presence of Velten himself, and that during Velten's lifetime, Krumhardt at no point abandons his deeply ingrained sense of values in favour of those of his mysterious friend. In view of Krumhardt's continued adherence to the bourgeois way of life, it is not surprising, then, that at the outset of his narrative he looks at Velten (whom he had not seen or heard from for a considerable time) from an unashamedly bourgeois viewpoint. He introduces himself and his parents in terms which suggest that an individual's character can



be gleaned from a perusal of his social statistics - education, job, position in the social hierarchy<sup>53</sup> - and after giving us a first indication of his father's personality, adds that even up to the present day, he still goes to his father (by way of an enlarged photograph on his desk!) for advice and enlightenment.<sup>54</sup> (The extent of his father's considerable attachment to conventional social values is discussed below). More significant, however, is the first passage where Krumhardt reflects at length on the character and fate of Velten:

Bin ich nicht heute der einzige von uns dreien, der seine gesunden fünf Sinne exakt und werkmäßig beieinandergehalten und es nach bürgerlichen Begriffen (sehr wohl berechtigten!) zu einer soliden Existenz in der schwankenden Erdenwelt gebracht hat? Und hält mich dieser alte Zauber heute nicht mehr denn je - der Zauber der Nachbarschaft, trotzdem daß Velten Andres und Helene Trotzendorff auf anderen Wegen und, nach unseren bürgerlichen Begriffen, verlorengegangen sind in der Welt und die Welt nicht gewonnen haben? Wenigstens der arme Velten. Die hundertfache Millionärin ... ist ja wohl nicht ganz so sehr zu beachselzucken wie der ganz verrückte Mensch, der arme kuriose Kerl, der Andres! Schade um ihn, wie hätte der es mit seinen Talenten und seinen vielen, vielen guten Gelegenheiten, es zu was zu bringen, in der Welt zu etwas bringen können! (B.A. 19/226-27)

Whatever else may be true of Krumhardt, it cannot be said that he is an insensitive philistine, unaware of what is going on in the

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53 cf. p.54, Note 43, above, and Krumhardt's self-introduction: ".....ich (der Leutnant der Reserve liegt als längst abgetan bei den Papieren des deutschen Heerbanns), Oberregierungsrat Dr. jur. K. Krumhardt....." (B.A. 19/213)

54 Shortly afterwards, continuing in the same vein, he makes the (not altogether unjustified) suggestion that Velten was out of place in the well-ordered world of normality and that nine tenths of the misunderstandings which occurred had their source in this unchangeable state of affairs. (B.A. 19/222)

world around him;<sup>55</sup> his references to "this precarious world of ours" alone would mark him off from the type of confident, self-satisfied person we saw all too often in Abu Telfan.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the yardstick by which he measures Velten at this point is an essentially bourgeois one. He speaks of "eminently justified" bourgeois values and implies that the only way to come to terms with the insecurity of the present world is to stick as closely as possible to the traditional standards of society, which he assumes to be universally valid. Thus, the thought that Velten might have had some other goal or some other set of standards in mind never occurs to him, and he comes to the regretful and somewhat condescending conclusion that Velten, by neglecting to harness his talents and take advantage of the opportunities offered, has proved a failure in life.

At the outset, then, as we see in this and several other instances,<sup>57</sup> Krumhardt judges Velten from a well-defined bourgeois standpoint, and he seems clear in his own mind as to what sort of person Velten is. As the narrative proceeds, however, a new mood becomes apparent. The longer Krumhardt thinks about Velten and the

55 To the best of my knowledge we have to go back fully twenty years to find such a view expressed in a formal study. Georg Ullmann says of Krumhardt: "Das Unvermögen, Traum und Wirklichkeit voneinander zu unterscheiden, hat ihn unaufhaltsam in das Philistertum geführt." (Ullmann, op. cit., p.161). Such a statement seems to me incompatible with an unbiased reading of the text.

56 See especially pages 28-31 of this study.

57 Krumhardt's continuing allegiance to his father's values is seen in the fact that he feels periodic pangs of conscience at having strayed on occasion from the path of bourgeois virtue (cf. B.A. 19/254). His sympathy for Velten as a sort of "verirrter Bürger" is also evident when he asks: "Ach, was helfen die besten Karten dem in der Hand, der keinen Gebrauch von ihnen machen - kann?" (Significantly, not "macht" or even "machen möchte"). (B.A. 19/266)



events of their childhood and youth, the more the old fascination for Velten reasserts itself, this time, however, on a conscious level. It is as if Velten himself were there in the flesh, weaning him away from his normal routine. He even feels that the objective, "businesslike" style which he had been following is disintegrating and that he no longer has control over what he is writing.<sup>58</sup>

Velten threatens once again - even from the grave - to cast an irresistible spell over him:

Was meinem armen Vater seinerzeit so oft Verdruss und Sorgen machte, das Übergewicht dieses „Menschen“ über mich, das ist heute noch ebenso sehr da wie in jenen Tagen, wo er mich durch die Hecke und über die Zäune des Vogelsangs zu jedem Flug ins Blaue aus dem Schul-, Haus- und Familienwerkeltag wegholte und wir Helene Trotzendorff mit uns nahmen, wenn sie uns nicht gar voranflog. (B.A. 19/270)

As much of their previous relationship now reveals its significance for the first time to Krumhardt,<sup>59</sup> he becomes less and less sure of his original ground, no longer associating himself entirely with the purely bourgeois view of Velten which we saw elsewhere,<sup>60</sup> until, about half-way through the narrative, he admits that he is not really qualified to talk about Velten at all: „Ich habe sein Leben miterlebt, und doch, grade hier, vor diesen Blättern, überkommt es mich von Seite zu Seite mehr, wie ich der Aufgabe, davon zu reden, so

58 B.A. 19/304.

59 B.A. 19/292.

60 By the time the narrative has reached the period immediately prior to the Abitur, Krumhardt no longer sees Velten simply as a lost sheep; he now concedes some degree of validity to what Velten stands for, describing him as „ein Herr in einem Reich, das leider auch nicht sehr von dieser Welt war.“ (B.A. 19/261)

wenig gewachsen bin." (B.A. 19/295)<sup>61</sup>

Why is it that someone of Krumhardt's undoubted intelligence and accomplishment, a lawyer accustomed to seeking out the truth of the most obscure situations, should fail so completely to arrive at a considered view of someone whom he has known for over forty years? The answer lies in the fact that his means of assessing Velten are based on unsound criteria. When he calls Velten "(den) Mann, über den ... wirklich niemand etwas Genaueres wußte als ich,..." (B.A. 19/352), and when, after stating that Velten remained in continual contact with the Vogelsang throughout his stay abroad, he is forced to admit the following: "Ich bin eben in seinem Leben über nichts im Dunkel geblieben als - über ihn selber. Das war aber ja nicht seine Schuld!" (B.A. 19/318), then we suspect that there is something

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61 This inability to form a definite accurate opinion about Velten is the source of the many contradictory views which Krumhardt expresses in the remaining part of the narrative. Thus he calls Velten at one point "der Unmensch" (B.A. 19/379), and at another "der freie Weltwanderer" (B.A. 19/383); sometimes he looks at Velten in a very positive light and considers that he has, in fact, overcome the world (e.g. B.A. 19/295, 296, 304), while at other times he seems to take almost the opposite view (e.g. B.A. 19/319, 373). The reason for this confusion is not, as Barker Fairley contends (op. cit., especially pp.251-54), that Raabe himself was unsure of his attitude to Velten. It lies not in the fact (if it is a fact) that the novel is "a little foggy at the centre, in the characterization of Velten himself" (p.253), but in quite a different element altogether; having realised that the truth about Velten is beyond his grasp, Krumhardt is forced to look now at one aspect of his friend's character, now at another (and thus only a partial view of Velten is ever open to him at any one time). What he thinks about Velten will therefore vary (and show some element of contradiction) depending on what aspect seems most obvious at the time. Krumhardt himself realises that he will always be restricted in this way, and expresses his dilemma thus: "Schreibe ich übrigens denn nicht auch jetzt nur deshalb diese Blätter voll, ...um m i r über diesen Menschen, einen der mir bekanntesten meiner Daseinsgenossen, klarzuwerden? Aber es ist immer, als ob man Fäden aus einem Gobelinteppeich zupfe und sie unter das Vergrößerungsglas bringe, um die hohe Kunst, die der Meister an das ganze Gewebe gewendet hat, daraus kennenzulernen." (B.A. 19/318) The uncertainty of view (which is indeed present in the novel) must be attributed not to Raabe but to Krumhardt.



incomplete or basically inadequate in the methods and criteria he uses to form opinions about other people. In the case of Velten Andres, he has all the factual evidence necessary, but is unable to interpret it in such a way that a coherent picture emerges; and I wish to suggest that the reason for this lack of understanding lies not in any ultimately unapproachable element in Velten's character (for certain people, such as his mother and, to some extent, Hartleben, do realise the true nature of his being), but rather in the inadequacy of the tools which Krumhardt employs to solve the problem. His essentially sober, bourgeois way of looking at life has let him down on this occasion. His seemingly objective insistence on the importance of fact and detail (".....über den niemand etwas Genaueres wußte.....") to the almost total exclusion of feeling and imagination does not, it is true, prevent him from forming clear and (so far as we can see) fair opinions about other conventional people,<sup>62</sup> whose outlook and way of life are similar to his own, but it is clear that, in order to reach a fuller understanding of someone who stands outwith the bourgeois tradition, additional qualities, which that tradition neither encourages nor even takes into account, are needed. The bourgeois tradition has in large measure suppressed in Krumhardt such qualities as imagination and independence of thought, and thus it has put major obstacles in the way of his attempt to understand someone for whom they are the guiding principles of life.

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62 He is certainly respected by those who know him as a fair and capable judge of character. For Helene, he is "ein kluger, guter, verständiger Mann" (B.A. 19/403), and similarly, after Velten's death, Frau Feucht asks him (rhetorically in the context): ".....gegen wen könnte ich so meiner Seele Luft machen, wem könnte ich hiervon so erzählen als wie Ihnen?" (B.A. 19/390)

The lesson of Krumhardt's failure to comprehend the essence of Velten's personality is that the social perspective is too restricted and too narrowly conceived to allow of a general application. All that Krumhardt's thoughtful and painstaking reflection achieves is that he comes to realise the inadequacy of his previous position,<sup>63</sup> and while this is certainly valuable, it does not help him to any extent regarding his attempt to understand Velten (which is, after all, the original reason for his reflection).

It would seem, then, on the evidence of the lack of self-fulfilment experienced by Krumhardt (an indication, not appreciated by him at the time, of the insufficiency of his way of life) and of his failure even to reach any firm conclusions about Velten (an explicit admission of the inadequacy of his own perspective), that Raabe is here concerned to present a general indictment of the limitations of the social perspective. It could be argued, however (although I should not wish to defend such a point of view), that both phenomena merely show the bewildering, ruining effect which the imaginative personality of a social misfit has had on the fundamentally sound outlook of a respectable member of society. Such an argument would not, in all likelihood, attempt to draw general conclusions from the relationship of Krumhardt and Velten, and would claim that Raabe's presentation of the merits or otherwise of the social perspective is not affected in any way by that relationship. For such an argument (with its corollary of the ultimate sufficiency

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<sup>63</sup> It also shows him that things in this world are not so certain as they seem (a sentiment which is lent support by the motto with which Raabe prefixed the novel). This is, I believe, the main, though not the only, significance of Krumhardt's celebrated "Bühne des Lebens" passage. (B.A. 19/333-34)



of the social perspective) to be valid, it would have to be shown on a wider level that the various representatives of bourgeois society whom we encounter in the novel have at least as accurate an understanding of Velten as he has of them. To see whether this is, in fact, the case, I should like now to turn to the third and final consideration of my argument: the degree of mutual understanding between Velten and the people with whom he comes into contact.

Other than Krumhardt, the two most obvious representatives of bourgeois society are his father and his wife. Like Krumhardt, they have grown up in a predominantly bourgeois environment, but unlike him, neither of them ever admits to any doubts about the exclusive validity of the normal bourgeois way of looking at life. For them, the nature of things is stable, clear and not open to question.<sup>64</sup> This certainty of outlook proves, however, to be more of a hindrance than a help when they are confronted with an enigmatic figure such as Velten.

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64. Old Krumhardt's assumption of the solid, unquestionable state of things is well exemplified in the two passages where he urges his son not to waste his opportunities by following the example of Velten (B.A. 19/225-26 and 243-44). In this connection it is perhaps significant that he shares with Leonhard Hagebucher's father (Abu Telfan) the revealing habit of using the language of his profession in any context, whether appropriate or not (see pp. 26-28 of this study). (He addresses his wife, for example, in the following terms: "Na, was deine Andere dazu beigetragen hat, ... dazu sind die Akten noch nicht mit allen dazugehörenden Dokumenten versehen. Für die Doktorin mag deine Entschuldigung zu mildernden Umständen beitragen, Adolfine." B.A. 19/226, my emphasis). Anna realises that there is more than one way of looking at life (otherwise people like Velten simply would not exist), but she too is convinced that there is only one valid way, and only one correct answer to any problem. For her, common sense must always prevail at the expense of the imagination. (cf. especially her comments to this effect, B.A. 19/216 and 220). In this respect both old Krumhardt and Anna differ from Karl, who eventually comes to see the subjective nature of his own perspective (while still upholding the general validity of his way of life) and the many-sided nature of the world.

It is clear from what he says that old Krumhardt has no real idea of Velten's true nature. He looks at him solely from his own point of view, judging him solely by his own standards, never thinking for a moment that a different view of life or set of values could be involved. (In this respect his outlook corresponds closely to that evinced by Karl at the beginning of the narrative). Thus his estimation of Velten rises when he hears that he has established himself among business circles in America and that he has earned the respect „eines ihrer Allergrösten dorten, nämlich was das Geld anbetrifft." (B.A. 19/320) (As we learn from Krumhardt's narrative, this period, coinciding as it does with Helene's engagement to Mr. Mungo, was by no means the high point in Velten's life which old Krumhardt imagines it to be). For the rest, the unbendingly bourgeois attitude which we see here blinds him to several aspects of Velten's character. He is aware only of those elements in Velten's personality which seem to constitute a challenge to his own firmly established view of life; thus he speaks of Velten's "corrupting influence" on Karl (B.A. 19/267) and refuses to accord any degree of validity to the way Velten has chosen. Sincere and honest though he undoubtedly is, old Krumhardt never really shows much insight into Velten's character. His judgment on him as a silly, dreamy, soft-hearted, aimless adventurer is nowhere near the truth. On the other hand, Velten's view of old Krumhardt is much more penetrating and accurate. Although he does not share the old man's outlook or temperament, he respects his integrity and singlemindedness,<sup>65</sup> and is even able to

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65 See, for example, B.A. 19/258.



predict his feelings and reactions in a given situation. It may not seem particularly impressive that, after failing the Abitur examination, Velten is able to diagnose old Krumhardt's reaction - correctly, as we learn from old Krumhardt himself - as "(ein) melancholisches Behagen an meiner Schande" (B.A. 19/264),<sup>66</sup> but when he is able to predict (from his exile in America and with no clues except his mother's comments on the changing face of the Vogelsang) that in a short time the Krumhardt family will find their circumstances insufficiently congenial and will leave the district (B.A. 19/328), it is evident that he understands them somewhat better than they him.

In the case of Anna Krumhardt, the situation is even clearer. Her initial impression of Velten - a favourable, even idealised one - is at second hand, based on what she has been told by her husband.<sup>67</sup> After his return home, however, when she has had a chance to form her own opinion, her view of him changes fundamentally. For her too, only those sides of Velten's personality which conflict most with her own character seem to impress themselves on her. Whereas old Krumhardt has emphasised (and inveighed against) Velten's allegedly aimless, undisciplined,

66 cf. old Krumhardt's reaction, reported by Karl, B.A. 19/262.

67 When she thinks of Velten, she thinks in the first place of how he rescued her brother ("Schlappe") from drowning, but her general attitude towards him is conditioned by what Krumhardt has told her; this must have been a favourite topic with him, for Anna says that by now she knows almost as much about Velten, Helene and Karl as they do themselves. She senses, however, that no one seems really to have understood Velten properly (".....dein Freund Velten, aus dem keiner von euch je recht klug geworden zu sein scheint....", B.A. 19/343). Significantly, she is able to diagnose her husband's state of mind accurately, although (as we shall see presently) she is completely at a loss with Velten.

emotional nature, missing the singlemindedness and independence which he also possesses, Anna has eyes only for his (to her incomprehensible) contempt of worldly goods, his lack of domesticity, and what she sees as the unfeeling invulnerability of his nature (she sees him at first as „ruhig“ and „unverwundbar“ (B.A. 19/348), later as „hart...oder doch hart geworden in seinem Leben“ (B.A. 19/359) and finally as „ohne alles Gefühl“ (B.A. 19/369)), without ever stopping to ask what could have caused such a reputedly emotional, romantic personality to become so insensible.<sup>68</sup> Taken up as she is with the outward differences between herself and Velten, she cannot even guess at the wealth of emotion which had previously characterised him or sense the battle which he still has to wage to keep his feelings under control.<sup>69</sup> Krumhardt's inability to "read

68 In fairness to old Krumhardt and Anna, it should be stressed that the fact that they see totally differing (and indeed opposed) facets of Velten's character does not of itself invalidate either or both views. Outwardly at least, Velten does act differently after his return from America. Nevertheless, from what they say about Velten, and the way they react to him, it is clear that neither old Krumhardt nor Anna has much insight into his essential nature.

69 It is part of Velten's tragedy that he has not been able to stifle his emotions entirely. They may not seem to dominate his actions any longer, but they still play a big part in his inner life. It is because of this sensitivity that he burns all the property that is of any value to him rather than be left to torture himself wondering where this, that or the other object of his family's possession now lurks. (Stanley Radcliffe, op. cit. pp.593 and 601-603, sees a further, quite different significance behind all this). Indeed, in the burning of the property we see, possibly more clearly than anywhere else, the contrast between the sensitivity of Velten (who feels, for the reason stated, that he must destroy many things that were very dear to him) and the sentimentality of Krumhardt (who wants to hold on to one thing after another because of the childhood echoes which they evoke - cf. B.A. 19/372). (For a thorough examination of the theme of childhood in Die Akten des Vogelsangs, see Helmers: Die bildenden Mächte..., pp.56-69 and 72-76).



between the lines" (cf. B.A. 19/301) is much more clearly evident with Anna than with himself, and her lack of understanding of Velten is finally underlined when, on seeing the crowds of people outside his house on the day when he is giving away all the property he does not care to retain, she assumes immediately that Velten, who is really among the least aggressive of men, has done something terrible and that his house is being attacked by the outraged populace. Anna, who of all the characters in Die Akten des Vogelsangs asserts most consistently the continuing validity of the standards of bourgeois society, is unable to penetrate Velten's protective disguise<sup>70</sup> and so in the end forms a completely erroneous (because superficial and unbalanced) view of him. Velten, however, has much less difficulty in coming to an accurate reading of Anna's character. Taking his leave of Krumhardt and Anna after the funeral of Krumhardt's father, he forecasts what Anna's reaction on making his acquaintance will be; and, in fact, her reaction does include all the elements he mentions - a feeling that he is in some way daemonic; the knowledge that he is quite different from the image passed on by Krumhardt; the realisation that he never could have adapted himself to the routine life of the local community; and relief that his early and protracted absence from the Vogelsang has removed Krumhardt from his distracting influence and allowed him to develop along "normal"

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70 See p47 of this study, and Note 32.

lines.<sup>71</sup> Velten's imaginative qualities (something which bourgeois society frowns upon as being dangerous and liable to lead astray) enable him to put himself into the position of the person with whom he is confronted and to understand that person's outlook and actions better than otherwise could be the case. His "normal" fellow-citizens on the other hand, bound as they are by the restrictions which the conventions of society have imposed upon their development, are completely unable to bridge the gap that exists between them and someone so defiantly different as Velten; and this criticism can be made not just of Anna and old Krumhardt, but of practically all the socially oriented characters whose opinions on Velten are recorded. Anna's brother Ferdinand ("Schlappe") expresses his own opinion on several occasions (notably B.A. 19/357 and 369), and Krumhardt summarises now and again the general feeling of the community towards Velten.<sup>72</sup> In all of these cases too, the feeling is the same - the conviction that Velten is basically unstable and of a drifting disposition, qualified by a tinge of envy at the unfettered way of life he is able to lead, and at the luck and ("undeserved") good fortune that always seem to attend him. At no point does any of the views expressed show the slightest measure of insight into Velten's true character and purpose. If further proof

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71 A comparison of Velten's "forecast" (B.A. 19/345-46) and Anna's actual impression (B.A. 19/347-48) is highly illuminating. On a later occasion too (when Krumhardt asks him to be godfather to his infant son), Velten again shows penetrating insight into the character and outlook of Anna (B.A. 19/358-59). In addition, he talks of "(dem) wilden Walde der Welt, von dem sie gottlob nichts weiß." (B.A. 19/359), thus in one sentence evoking the essential difference between his world and hers, upholding the broader perspective of his own vision and yet not wishing to impose the burdens of such a vision on anyone else.

72 See, for example, B.A. 19/294, 297, 330 and 374.



of the insufficiency of the social perspective is indeed required, we need look no farther than to this glaring and, I believe, significant contrast.

Krumhardt is, then, not alone in his inability to understand someone whose system of values is not socially oriented; as far as his report allows us to look, all those who share his basic outlook on life also share the limitations of view which it has imposed upon him. What we saw in our examination of Krumhardt's relationship to Velten has, after all, a more general application. In Die Akten des Vogelsangs, Raabe portrays the social perspective as something too restrictive and incomplete to be universally valid. By its neglect, indeed in some cases suppression of the creative side of the human personality, it denies its adherents the means to assess people other than themselves and to appreciate properly any aspect of life other than the social. These findings confirm what we have already seen regarding Raabe's view of society in Abu Telfan (1867) and, on a general level, they reflect his attitude to society throughout the period of his mature writing.<sup>73</sup> In Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895), however, his approach is altogether more balanced and mature than in the earlier work. Whereas in Abu Telfan the only concession made to society is Leonard Hagebucher's belated, not very well motivated and rather unconvincing decision to settle down within the village community, Raabe sustains in Die Akten des Vogelsangs a constant, unresolved tension between the claims of society and those of the outsider, so that it is difficult to make hard-and-fast judgments

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73 A short survey of this topic as it applies to the works written between Abu Telfan and Die Akten des Vogelsangs follows in the concluding part of this Chapter.

without at the same time qualifying the original statement to a considerable degree.<sup>74</sup> Thus, although the social perspective is indeed shown to be inadequate, it is nowhere dismissed out of hand or satirised from a distance as it is in Abu Telfan; and although the narrator's social allegiance and position of themselves lend authority and weight to his criticisms (an authority of a kind missing in the more crudely satirical atmosphere of Abu Telfan), his ability and transparent integrity invest his eventual recommitment to the values of the community with a validity that Hagebucher's conversion could never claim; for Krumhardt offers us good and (in some degree at least) acceptable reasons for his decision not to abandon the way of life to which he has been committed from childhood: firstly, although he realises that there is something noble and admirable about Velten's way of life, he is understandably cautious about committing himself to something which, on his own admission, he does not really understand; secondly (and here he is supported, slightly unexpectedly, by Frau Andres)<sup>75</sup> he sees that people like himself are necessary for the day-to-day running of the community's affairs and so have a valid contribution to make to the life of the whole; thirdly (for Krumhardt possibly the weightiest reason of all), he feels that he can fulfil his duty towards his family only by maintaining his present social position and by helping to uphold the standards which he has been brought up to respect;<sup>76</sup> I believe that

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74 See Notes 40 and 55 above, where conflicting viewpoints on this question are set out.

75 B.A. 19/312.

76 See especially the powerful expression of his sense of ethical and moral responsibility on B.A. 19/344-45.



the evident weight attaching to these three considerations adds powerful support to the view that Raabe intends us to regard Krumhardt's position with at least as much sympathy as Velten's. Finally, although I have been concerned in this Chapter to show how (according to Raabe) the perception of the socially oriented is in many ways less well developed than that of Velten Andres, it is also true to say, as I hope to demonstrate at a later stage,<sup>77</sup> that Velten's own grasp of reality is by no means complete. I do not believe that all this is the result of a muddled attitude on Raabe's part or that he was unsure of what he wanted to say; rather he brings the positive and negative aspects of all ways of life portrayed in the novel to light with meticulous and considered fairness. In the end, therefore, we are left to conclude that the social perspective, in common with other ways of looking at life, is not fully adequate in all circumstances; that it can prove disastrously misleading as an aid to understanding a person outwith its domain or a situation outwith its context; but that just as certainly, the standards which it sets and the type of person which, at best, it can produce have an essential though not exclusive role to play in the development of the human community. With this moderate but critical judgment Raabe expresses his final viewpoint on the value of the social perspective as a means towards insight into the nature of the world and the character of one's fellow human beings.

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77 See in particular the second part of Chapter Four in Section Two of this study.

(iii) Common and unifying elements

There are, then, obvious differences both in outlook and technique between the tentative, sometimes rather confused gropings of Abu Telfan (1867) and the finely balanced awareness underlying Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895); but when all is said and done, it is the unifying factors rather than the contrasts and differences which weigh most heavily in the mind of the reader. In a sense it is justifiable to regard the later novel as a successful though somewhat melancholy confirmation of the stirrings which had first become apparent during Raabe's years in Stuttgart, and if this is indeed so, it suggests a high degree of consistency in the continuing development of his attitude to social values and institutions. That this is, in fact, the case is amply corroborated by a brief survey of Raabe's approach to these questions in works which appeared between the publication of Abu Telfan and the writing of the Akten.

It would be a cumbersome and rather unrewarding exercise to consider individually every work from the period involved and to analyse each one in turn, but a short consideration even of the main points arising from a few representative works is enough to demonstrate that for practically the whole of his mature creative life, Raabe's delineation of social values and institutions is informed by a clear consistency of attitude such as I suggested above. That is not to say, of course, that these works are alike to the point of monotony - that is very far from the case; each has a clearly defined character and flavour of its own - but we do find certain concerns recurring throughout the period, and certain elements reappearing in novel after novel.



If we look, for instance, at Raabe's approach to society in Der Dräumling (1871), Meister Autor (1873), Pfisters Mühle (1884) and Stopfkuchen (1889) (to take what are probably the most representative examples), then I think we must conclude that, allowing for an understandable shift of emphasis from work to work, there are undoubtedly a number of important recurring elements, making for a distinct feeling of continuity. In the first place, the reader detects in each of these novels a clear sense of distance between Raabe and the society he portrays; even in Der Dräumling, seen by Stanley Radcliffe, I believe rightly, as a retreat from the "attack on the Philisterwelt, so recently and so sharply delivered in Abu Telfan and Der Schüdderump" (1869).<sup>78</sup> there is no denying the sometimes malicious satire which he brings to bear on the ignorant self-satisfaction of the local community; whether this is seen as an assault from without or as an attack from within is relatively unimportant: the fact remains that there is certainly no question of an identification of author and community. In later novels, particularly in Meister Autor, Pfisters Mühle and Stopfkuchen, the gap between Raabe and the communities he portrays seems wider; his sense of alienation seems more deeply rooted and the unease with which he observes and faces new and more pernicious social trends is more immediately apparent. Yet even amid the melancholy dejection of the "sunken gardens", the wistful longing of the doomed mill, the unthinking materialism of the new industrialisation or the mute misery of innocent social outcasts, there is a separate, apparently opposing force at work: even where Raabe's disillusionment with accepted social values and structures

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78 Radcliffe, op.cit., p.247.

seems most definite, we cannot in all honesty state that he is willing to ease them off completely and finally. Kunemund, for example, eventually brings himself to accept the existence of a new age and new values, even if he cannot share other people's enthusiasm for them; in the figure of Adam Asche, Raabe seems to have been attempting to embody an ideal compromise (if such a thing is indeed possible) between the private values of an earlier age and the brash demands of a new materialist culture;<sup>79</sup> and even in Stopfkuchen, seen by some as little more than his semi-secret revenge on the educated middle class which had scorned his vocation and ignored his

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79 The characterisation of Adam Asche, and the nature of Raabe's intentions with respect to him have been the focus of much heated argument over the years. Lukacs, for example, takes a predictably poor view of what he condemns as Raabe's attempted reconciliation with capitalist society after 1870 and suggests that his "decent" capitalists (such as Asche) lack "die Wahrheit des Typischen" (Lukacs, op.cit., pp.245-46). Georg Ullmann too deplores Raabe's "compromise" with the increasingly materialist values of the Second Empire, characterising the novels of the 1870s as "(einen) völlige(n) Versöhnungsversuch mit dem Kapitalismus." (Ullmann, op.cit., p.107. His survey of Pfisters Mühle (1884) (pp.108-111) is based on this underlying assumption). On the other hand, several non-Marxist critics see Pfisters Mühle, and the figure of Asche in particular, in a much more charitable light. For Wolfgang Reuter, Asche is "der positiv gesehene Vertreter des Neuen". Although admittedly "ein riskierter Mischtyp", he is nevertheless a guarantor of moral values for the future. Reuter's conclusion is enthusiastic: "Hier tritt...Raabes Aufgeschlossenheit für das Freie, Unbürgerliche real klar hervor." (Reuter, op.cit., pp.125-27). My own feeling lies somewhere between these opposing views: while Raabe's characterisation of Asche does not carry sufficient conviction to allow him to stand as the representative of a synthesis between two cultures and two ways of life (the "compromise" which the Marxist critics despise so much), Raabe's attempt is in itself proof that he was aware of the necessity to make the best of the given situation, in this case of the need to salvage from the overwhelming materialism of the coming age some lasting and worthwhile values. Raabe's presentation may not be convincing; even the supposition on which it is based may be questionable; but he does not deserve the moral condemnation which this honest though possibly misguided attempt has attracted from some quarters.



writing, Raabe does, as I hope to show in Section Three, concede some level of justification to the system whose faults and shortcomings he so clearly pillories.

It is clear, then, that in general terms the continued existence side by side of two seemingly contradictory factors makes for a remarkable degree of continuity of approach in the novels I have just mentioned: on the one hand Raabe deliberately distances himself from the communities he portrays and, by the same token, from the values they represent; on the other hand, he is obviously reluctant to discard these entirely, and consequently he accords them some degree of validity, however circumscribed, on each occasion; and when we recognise that this state of affairs pertains not only in the novels I have just referred to but also in the two major works with which we have been preeminently concerned in the course of this Chapter - Abu Telfan and Die Akten des Vogelsangs<sup>80</sup> - we must, it seems to me, pause to consider the implications of what is obviously a fundamental element in Raabe's portrayal of society and social values.

I think that the situation which we are faced with here can be fairly summed up in these terms: the conflicting factors evident in Raabe's social criticism reflect a wider, basic tension inherent not only in his approach to this particular topic, but in his work as a whole, for on the wider level too we are made to recognise again and again a continuing and lasting tension between insight and realism, between the ideal and the practicable, between the desirable and the possible. As an imaginative creative writer, Raabe was gifted with a heightened sensitivity which forced him to discard many of the

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80 cf. pp.38-44 and 75-77 of this study.

illusions which his fellow human beings clung to without question, and to express this awareness in literary form. At the same time, however, he was also possessed of a measure of practical realism, and recognised that the real cannot always, indeed may not ever, approach the level of the ideal. The artist's sensitivity and awareness have thus to coexist with the realist's sense of what is possible in a particular situation. Even at this comparatively early stage, then, one crucially important aspect of Raabe's writing begins to emerge: side by side with his finely developed sense for patterns in life goes a cautionary awareness of the complexity of every situation and every relationship. This is the source of the doubts and hesitations so evident in Die Akten des Vogelsangs. It does not, as Barker Fairley would have it, make for a blurred or fuzzy view of things;<sup>81</sup> rather it is the source of the impressively rich texture of his most mature writing. In social terms, Raabe is all too aware of the distortions inherent in and emanating from conventional social morality, but he is aware too that it is probably better to try to reach some sort of honest accommodation with an imperfect world than to cry vainly in the wilderness for the creation of a perfect one. These opposing elements in Raabe's view of the world seem, as it were, to compete with one another in novel after novel; the emphasis may change from time to time, but the underlying pattern is substantially unaltered. In terms of his social criticism, Raabe is not an unoriginal apologist for bourgeois values after the manner of Böll or Gaiser, but rather he is the holder and presenter of what might well be characterised as a consistently provisional attitude to

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81 See Note 61 above.



society and social values.<sup>82</sup> He is neither dazzled - nor depressed, as the case may be - by his isolated, personal vision, nor is he suffocated by the temptingly cosy lures of smug and self-satisfied conformity. In this context, as indeed from the standpoint of his work as a whole, the unattainable perfection of the ideal coexists in a state of fruitful and creative tension with the necessary imperfection of reality.

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82 This has been well noted by Reuter, who suggests, in my view quite rightly, „.....daß sich die beiden Komponenten immer wieder die Waage halten, und daß Raabes Typisch-Eigenstes gerade in diesem ständigen Sich-Überschneiden des Antithetischen liegt,....." (Reuter, op. cit., p.163).

## Chapter 2 - Escape into fantasy

In the course of the previous Chapter I attempted to demonstrate how the characterisation of Karl Krumhardt, and in particular his peculiar and fluctuating relationship to Velten Andres, lends the social criticism of Die Akten des Vogelsangs an intensity and conviction which it would have been difficult to achieve by other means.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, the criticism of society and social values which emerges from an examination of that novel is serious, considered and sincere, but even in such a work as Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) Raabe is not concerned exclusively with the faults and shortcomings of society or with its questionable priorities. It was not written, as parts of Abu Telfan (1867) seem to have been, in a spirit of satirical condemnation; it is a book which offers us doubts rather than certainties, and dilemmas rather than judgments. It is a book which raises more questions than it answers, and one of the most immediate questions which must spring to mind concerns the position of the outsider, of the individual who rejects the commonly accepted standards of society and their claim to reflect basic truths about life and humanity, and who goes his own way either in terms of social intercourse or of personal morality. Much of the interest in Die Akten des Vogelsangs is, of course, focussed on just such a personality: in Velten Andres Raabe has created a character who, instead of accepting a conventional set of values and behaviour patterns, follows an entirely individual, not to say idiosyncratic road, trusting to a combination of intellect, intuition and sheer

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1 See especially pp.53-68 of this study.



good fortune to avoid the pitfalls it presents. What distinguishes him most clearly from the majority of average law-abiding citizens (and in Die Akten des Vogelsangs, as well as in the real world, they undoubtedly do form the majority) is the power of his imagination: where those around him are fearful and uncertain, he is daring and decisive (as his thoughtless but ultimately successful rescue of „Schlappe" demonstrates);<sup>2</sup> where they are content to subscribe to the safe but relatively unrewarding pattern of personal and professional conventionality („die breite Straße der goldenen Mittelmäßigkeit", as it is described by Krumhardt with typically wry accuracy),<sup>3</sup> he feels compelled to abandon all prospects of material prosperity and social advantage for the sake of fulfilling his romantic longings for a woman in whom his imaginative yearnings have invested, or so it seems, almost magical properties.<sup>4</sup> By virtue of the strength and influence of his imagination, Velten lives on quite a different level from most of his fellow citizens, and in view of this, two questions arise naturally: firstly, are Velten, and the other figures elsewhere in Raabe who share his main characteristics, seen as living at a higher level of intuitive perception or imaginative reality, or do they too find themselves sooner or later

2 See p.245 of this study, Note 75.

3 B.A. 19/263

4 Both Velten and Krumhardt seem entranced by the spell of Helene's personality during their years of adolescence (cf. B.A. 19/246: „Während wir, Velten und ich, wie letzterer sich ausdrückte, unsern Stiefel fortgingen, wuchs unsere Kleine auf wie eine gebannte, verzauberte Prinzessin aus dem Märchenbuch der Brüder Grimm.") In Krumhardt's case, however, the spell wears off with the arrival of full adulthood, whereas Velten is never really able to rid himself completely of this fundamental and fateful delusion. (cf. pp.229-37 of this study).

in a state of self-induced delusion as to the nature of the world and their position within it? And secondly, what wider conclusions are we entitled to draw regarding Raabe's general preoccupations when we weigh this aspect of his work against the social criticism we looked at in the previous Chapter? Although the second question is ultimately the more important, it cannot be approached confidently until the first one has been answered, and for that reason I should now like to proceed to an examination of that first question: how does Raabe conceive of the imaginative outsider? Is he idealised, ironised or merely observed, and are his imaginative gifts a hindrance or a help in coming to terms with the world and his particular situation?

It might seem, from what I have just said, that the most suitable course of action would be an analysis of the characterisation and significance of Velten Andres, since he seems to epitomise so very clearly the features we are interested in at this stage, and it is certainly true that from several points of view an examination along these lines would most probably be very fruitful. Despite these definite attractions, however, I should prefer to leave Velten out of account for the moment, except by way of contrast or additional comment, and concentrate rather on the characterisation of certain figures from two earlier works: Wunnigel (1876) and Deutscher Adel (1877).

There are two main reasons for this preference. Firstly, both the character of Velten Andres and his place in Die Akten des Vogelsangs as a whole have already been the subject of some comment in the previous Chapter, and I shall be discussing his wider



importance for Raabe's work in some detail at a later stage.<sup>5</sup> I think that a further detailed analysis, even though it would have as its basis a slightly different point of view, would inevitably entail a great deal of repetition, and little would be gained in the way of additional insight into the significance for Raabe of the sort of personality Velten represents. In view of this, and in order to probe as widely as possible within the framework of Raabe's mature works, I feel it would be better to introduce some new material, and this leads in to the second aspect underlying my choice of examples in this Chapter: the positive significance of Wunnigel and Deutscher Adel in terms of this study as a whole. While it is certainly true that characters whose personality is dominated by their imagination are to be found throughout the whole of Raabe's work, the most significant examples do not arise until the mid-1870s.<sup>6</sup> In his earlier works, and in particular in the period from the beginning of his literary career to his return to Braunschweig (1854-1870), such characters tend to appear one-dimensional and rather unconvincing. There is, for instance, nothing original or even particularly

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5 See Chapter II,4 of this study.

6 An excellent general survey of this feature of Raabe's work is given in the Chapter devoted to Raabe in Herman Meyer's study of the Sonderling, quoted above. This Chapter (pp.229-289) deals with Die Chronik der Sperlingsgasse (1855), Ein Frühling (1857), Die Kinder von Finkenrode (1858), Die Leute aus dem Walde (1862), Der Hungerpastor (1863), Abu Telfan (1867), Der Schütterump (1869), Meister Autor (1873), Horacker (1875), Wunnigel (1876), (without, however, mentioning Brüggeemann), Alte Nester (1879), Stopfkuchen (1889) and Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895). A notable gap in this impressive list is the novel Deutscher Adel (1877), which is discussed later in this present Chapter. Stanley Radcliffe's dissertation, although covering a wider spectrum of behaviour than that which characterises the imaginative outsider, also makes many pertinent observations on the type of character I wish to deal with in this Chapter.

arresting in the figure of Günther Wallinger (Die Kinder von Finkenrode, 1858), whose youthful disappointments in love are transmuted by his over-active imagination into an eternally hopeful search for a fairy princess. And although Joseph Sonntag (Drei Federn, 1865) finds periodic consolation in the adaptive recesses of his own mind, and is able at the same time to develop his young son's imaginative capacities, he turns out to be nothing more than a well-meaning but indolent individual whose impractical nature brings almost inevitably financial ruin and subsequent penury.<sup>7</sup> In his case, however, material austerity does not go hand in hand with spiritual enrichment; he is simply a pathetic dreamer, important, as far as the novel is concerned, only by virtue of his relationship to August Sonntag and the part he plays in the development of the latter's personality.<sup>8</sup> To a considerable degree, both Wallinger and Joseph Sonntag are merely stock characters, derived from the popular assumptions of the literature of previous generations. In the

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7 See Radcliffe, op.cit., pp.78ff. for a thorough discussion of Die Kinder von Finkenrode.

8 See especially pp.216-21 of this study. In her doctoral dissertation, Maria Vogel offers a retrospective medical diagnosis of Joseph Sonntag's mental condition, stating that he shows most of the symptoms normally associated with dementia praecox (a form of schizophrenia developing in early adult life), and suggesting that Raabe wished perhaps to portray either a schizophrenic or a hebephrenic. She concludes, however, that the clinical pattern is not reproduced entirely accurately, because Raabe's interest lies not with medical case histories but with the portrayal of psychological eccentricities. (Maria Vogel: „Darstellung der von Wilhelm Raabe geschilderten seelischen Abnormitäten und Versuch einer psychiatrischen Deutung." Diss. Med., Frankfurt am Main, 1949, pp.33-34). The general question of the value of such an approach in literary terms is discussed in Appendix A of this study. (See especially pp.351-53).



context of Raabe's work as a whole they are neither significant nor outstanding figures in their own right. Their characterisation is, however, broadly representative of the rather shallow treatment of the imaginative outsider in his early works, and I think it is fair to say that no general change in attitude occurs until the mid 1870s, when Raabe seems suddenly to have become heavily preoccupied with the problem. In this later period his treatment of the imaginative outsider is characterised by a complexity and appeal missing in most of his earlier works; indeed, that question represents one of the major foci of his attention from then on right up to the abandonment of Altershausen in 1902. In this respect, Wunnigel (1876) and Deutscher Adel (1877) occupy a particularly significant position: although they stand, chronologically speaking, at the beginning of this new development, they are in another sense central to it, for, although the problem of the imaginative outsider has a part in most of Raabe's later novels, there is hardly one where it is so clearly dominant as in the two novels I have just mentioned;<sup>9</sup> by concentrating on these two works we are, therefore, able to approach this aspect of Raabe's creativity in its most intense form. In addition, it is surely of some significance that only eight days elapsed between the completion of Wunnigel and the beginning of the first draft of Deutscher Adel;<sup>10</sup> this suggests that Raabe was so

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9 Later novels where the theme of the imaginative outsider plays a part (though not necessarily a predominant part) include Vom Alten Proteus (1875), Horacker (1875), Wunnigel (1876), Deutscher Adel (1877), Alte Nester (1879), Prinzessin Fisch (1882), Pfisters Mühle (1884), Das Odfeld (1887), Stopfkuchen (1889), Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) and Altershausen (abandoned in 1902).

10 Raabe completed Wunnigel on August 7th, 1876 and finished his check of the manuscript on the 14th. On the 15th he began work on the first draft of what was to become Deutscher Adel.

preoccupied that he felt compelled, as it were, to write the whole thing out of his system. Consequently we are in a uniquely favourable situation to assess what is stable and lasting in Raabe's later presentation of the imaginative outsider, and what undergoes changes and developments.<sup>11</sup> With that in mind, I should like now to turn to the two novels in question, referring also by way of comparison or contrast to other works from the same period when such a procedure seems useful.

(1) Wunnigel (1876)

Whatever else may be said about it, Wunnigel is undoubtedly almost entirely successful in terms of entertainment, and for that reason alone it is worth attention in any broadly based study of Raabe's work, for in common with most true humour it does not exist in a vacuum but relies for much of its force on the fact that it has its foundations in authentic situations and in the behaviour and

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11 In view of this, Siegfried Hajek's suggestion (in his doctoral dissertation: "Mensch und Welt im Alterswerk Wilhelm Raabes", Bonn 1949, pp.15-16) that Wunnigel should be regarded as the last work of Raabe's third period and Deutscher Adel as the beginning of the fourth is rather surprising. The distinction he draws between the characteristic features of the third period ("Fluchtversuche in den verschiedensten Richtungen: Satire, Illusion, Phantastik, Charakterfatalismus, Opfergedanke") and of the fourth ("Einsicht in die tragische Gebrochenheit des Menschen, jedoch dialektische Bejahung. Überwindung der Schicksalskausalität durch Teleologie, Beschränkung auf den Kleinen Raum echter Lebenserfüllung. Geborgenheitsgefühl, Heiterkeit, liebendes Opfer als letzter Sinn.") may or may not apply on a general level; it does not, however, obscure the fact that, as I hope to show, the similarities binding Wunnigel and Deutscher Adel together are much more substantial than the contrasts setting them apart from one another. For that very reason I maintain that a comparison of these two novels is unusually valuable.



reactions of genuine people. There is a good deal more than a grain of truth in the observations and implied conclusions beneath the superficial fun, and the undoubted success of the humorous presentation, although a source of pleasure and satisfaction in itself, should not obscure the basically serious intention underlying the novel as a whole.<sup>12</sup> Both on the humorous and the serious level the attention of the reader is concentrated mainly on two central characters, Wunnigel himself, and the old watchmaker Wenzel Brüggemann, and as might be expected, these two figures form the basis for Raabe's presentation of the imaginative outsider in the novel.

Despite its merits both as a work of literature and, so to speak, as a landmark in Raabe's literary development, Wunnigel has attracted comparatively little critical attention; to the best of my knowledge it has, at least since the end of the Second World War, been the exclusive subject of only one published article, not to speak of any longer study, a rather surprising state of affairs when one considers the disproportionate attention which several arguably

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12 This view is not universally accepted among students of Raabe. Barker Fairley, for example, resists the temptation to compare Wunnigel with Velten Andres, arguing that, by virtue of the exaggeratedly grotesque and comical characterisation of the central figure, the earlier novel cannot be taken sufficiently seriously for such a parallel to be useful. (Fairley, op.cit., p.255). While not wishing to deny the grotesque elements in Wunnigel, I feel, nevertheless, for reasons which should emerge in the course of this Chapter, that the book does in fact have a serious underlying purpose and that this is not ultimately vitiated by the grotesque presentation Raabe chose to adopt.

inferior, or at least less significant works have received.<sup>13</sup> Even more surprising, perhaps, is the fact that it is ignored in one or two important studies where it might well have been considered highly relevant.<sup>14</sup> Where it has been taken into account, normally in the context either of a general survey or of an examination of a particular thematic or technical aspect of Raabe's work as a whole, attention has for the most part been concentrated on the character whose name forms the title of the novel. Wunnigel himself is, of course, the central character, and for most of the time he is either firmly in the forefront of events or (for example during his journey to Italy) casting a large and dominating shadow over them from a distance. In attempting to come to terms with the admittedly provocative personality he projects, some critics have, whether willingly or reluctantly, found themselves taking up a decidedly didactic posture, sometimes to the extent of passing highly critical, even hostile moral judgments on his behaviour. In this vein, H. R. Klieneberger talks of Wunnigel as seeking "refuge in a world of phantasy without overcoming (his) egoism"<sup>15</sup> and Wolfgang Reuter, describing him as a "Lebensphantast" (a particularly pejorative term

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13 These statements are made on the basis of entries in Eppelsheimer's Bibliographie der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft (1945-73) and of information in the Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft (1960-74) and the bibliographical volume of the Braunschweiger Ausgabe. The one article which I have come across is Hermann Kinder: "Spiegelung der Zeit in der Ewigkeit. Geschichte und Dichtung in Wilhelm Raabes Wunnigel - ein problemorientierter Lesevorschlag", in Der Deutschunterricht 27 (1975), Heft 3, pp.55-69.

14 In this regard the omission of Wunnigel from the otherwise excellent and penetrating essay of Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz ("The Tailor and the Sweeper...", quoted above) is particularly striking.

15 H.R. Klieneberger: "Charles Dickens and Wilhelm Raabe", in Oxford German Studies 4 (1969), pp.90-117. Quotation from p.111.



in the context in which he uses it), condemns his „Egoismus und leidenschaftliche Schwäche“, and goes on to state his moral repudiation of Wunnigel in the most unmistakable terms: „Sein Egoismus ist absolut verwerflich.“<sup>16</sup> In some respects it is easy to see how such statements arise: there is no doubt that Wunnigel is the sort of character whom it would be difficult to like in real life, and, on one level at least, his egoistic attitude, especially towards Anselma and Weyland, is undeniable. This in itself, however, does not approach the sources of his personality; it describes, as it were, the symptoms, his behaviour, but does not deal with the underlying causes, the various intrinsic and extrinsic factors which cause Wunnigel to act as he does. In order to come to some sort of informed conclusion as to the wider significance of the character of Wunnigel we have, therefore, to suspend temporarily our likes and dislikes, even our moral and social values, and attempt in the first instance to analyse the nature and effect of the forces which fashion his behaviour. Only after that has been done can we decide whether moral judgments are appropriate in this case.

Although it might not appear so at first sight, one of the most important aspects of Wunnigel's personality is his intelligence, and his capacity for ordered thought and expression. We are told, for example, that he has written a standard work on legal proceedings in bankruptcy (rather an appropriate subject in view of his situation in the later stages of the novel) as well as two excellent treatises

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<sup>16</sup> Reuter, op. cit., pp.99-102. The following passage is typical of Reuter's uncompromisingly moralising approach: „....er muß scheitern, weil er die bürgerliche Welt, der er angehörte, ohne inneres Recht, aus Egoismus und leidenschaftlicher Schwäche verlassen hat.“ (op. cit., p.99).

on the law of inheritance, and that he is considered by experts in his field to be an outstanding legal practitioner;<sup>17</sup> he has risen to the responsible position of Regierungsrat, his professional competence is admired openly even by such a shrewd man of the world as Sesamoff,<sup>18</sup> and even in the realm of antiques he displays a certainty and appreciation which mark him off as a connoisseur. Indeed, he gives the impression of having the ability to familiarise himself rapidly and thoroughly with almost anything which captures his interest. But instead of enjoying the satisfaction which one might have expected him to derive from such a favourable combination of personal intellect, professional success and absorbing spare-time interests, he suddenly resigns his job, abandons all social ties and strikes out, accompanied by his hapless daughter, to lead a nomadic life in search of antique curios and treasures.

This decision is taken in pursuance of the second major aspect of Wunnigel's personality, the irrational side of his being, whether it be called imagination, creativity or simply individuality. It is this aspect of his character which remains most firmly in the mind of the reader, and while his intellectual capacities should not be forgotten, it is his imagination which brings about the initial change of direction in his way of life, and which comes to dominate him more and more in the course of the novel. It sets him apart not only from the self-confident, openly philistine clients of the Riedhorn but also from more broad-minded, enlightened people such as Weyland and Sesamoff and must, therefore, be seen as the most important

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17 B.A. 13/101.

18 B.A. 13/149.



distinguishing factor between him and the other characters in the book. What we have to consider at this point is, firstly, where it leads him, and secondly, why the results of its influence are as they are.

In simple terms, Wunnigel's decision to abandon social convention and to follow his own imaginative leanings leads in the end to utter ruin and humiliation. Each successive misfortune which befalls him deals a further blow to his mental - and finally also to his physical - condition, and a progressive deterioration sets in, becoming especially noticeable after his return from the disastrous trip to Italy. In the later stages of the novel he is nothing more than a pathetic shadow of the dynamic personality he had once been. Both in his anxious insistence on shade and seclusion while at the Schloßberg (a consequence, as Kalmüsel rightly surmises, of a bad conscience),<sup>19</sup> and in the grotesquely comic final scenes in Brüggemann's house where he cowers beneath the bedclothes whenever the cold truth of the outside world threatens to destroy the security of his refuge, he is a wretched, pitiable figure compared to the

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19 B.A. 13/112-13.

self-assured individualist we meet at the outset of the story.<sup>20</sup> His decision to follow his imaginative and creative impulses is, then, met with unmitigated disaster, but this too only leads us to ask once more: why should this be? Why should a man like Wunnigel, gifted with imagination and intelligence, and occupying a position of high social standing, finally come to such an ignominious end?

If, as I suggested above, the main stimulus to Wunnigel's actions lies in his imagination, then it is in the way he exercises that imagination that the answer to this question must be sought. This is presented on two levels in the novel, and I should like to consider these in turn, as they hold the key to an understanding of

20 Among other ways, this development is suggested by the contrasting descriptions of Wunnigel's physical appearance set at the beginning of the book and following his return from Italy. Weyland's first impression is moderately favourable: „Da saß der Kerl, den das Riedhorn, sowohl was den Wirt wie auch die Gäste anbetraf, so gern wieder losgeworden wäre - ein jedenfalls munterer Herr von intelligentem, gesundem, aber freilich etwas absonderlichem und rauhem Äußern. Sein Alter wurde von dem erfahrenen Physiologen sofort auf fünf und fünfzig bis sechzig Jahre geschätzt, sein Temperament dem sanguinisch-cholerischen zugerechnet, ein maßgebendes Urteil über seinen angeborenen und erworbenen Charakter jedoch vorsichtigerweise von dem demnächst genaueren Bekanntwerden abhängig gemacht." (B.A. 13/25-26) Here Wunnigel's self-assurance and individuality are revealed in his outward appearance. Similarly, the mental and psychological changes which he undergoes after the journey to Italy are reflected in this passage, taken from a later section of the novel: „Auf seinen Wegen im Hause und im Garten trug er den Kragen seines Rockes und Überrockes stets so hoch als möglich aufgeklappt. Den breitrandigen Filzhut zog er dagegen so tief als möglich über die Nase herab; und was das schlimmste war, diese Nase erschien spitz, während sie sonst sich mehr dem Kloben näherte, und angsthafte blau, während sie früher ins Rötliche spielte. Auch stand sie ihm selten geradeaus. Vogelschnabelartig beweglich bohrte sie jetzt unablässig nach rechts, nach links - immer über die Schulter; und die Augen folgten ihr oder liefen ihr vielmehr voraus gleich denen eines am Verfolgungswahnsinn Leidenden." (B.A. 13/111).



Wunnigel's personality and therefore of his significance in the wider context of Raabe's over-all approach to the problems of reality and illusion. The two aspects I have in mind are firstly the role Wunnigel's imagination plays in his relationships to other people and to the world at large, and secondly the aesthetic interests which he develops under the influence of his creative impulses.

With regard to the role played by Wunnigel's imagination in his social relationships, one point is clear from the outset: Wunnigel himself sees it in quite a different light from any of the other characters, and certainly from the reader. To be sure, he is very much aware of the irrational, creative side of his personality, but he looks on it as an entirely positive quality, something he is grateful and glad to call his own. In his opinion, the idiosyncrasies of his own character have both an assertive and a protective function: on the one hand he is gifted with an artistic flair denied to the majority of people, and this in itself sets him apart and asserts, in his case often rather provocatively, his separate individuality. He is proud to be different and loses no opportunity to demonstrate his scorn for what he sees as the narrow philistinism of most of his fellow-citizens. Even his ostentatious action in sitting in the best chair at the Riedhorn - a place tacitly reserved for one of the local worthies - and his nonchalant air on returning to find the place occupied and the regular clients grinning in cosy satisfaction is a reflection of his proud, almost arrogant individuality:

Mit einem höhnisch-triumphierenden Blick sahen sie alle auf den Regierungsrat, wie er mit dem Doktor Weyland auf die zwei leer gewordenen Stühle in der schlechtesten Ecke des Gemaches zuschritt. Aber sie irrten sich, wenn sie glaubten, ihn jetzt ihrerseits geärgert zu

haben. Wunnigel war ein Mann, der sich dahin setzte, wo es ihm gefiel, und den Platz auch festzuhalten wußte, sonst aber sich viel zu wenig aus irgendeiner Planetenstelle machte, um sich durch ein Grinsen aus seinem Gleichmut bringen zu lassen, wenn er dieselbige von einem andern besetzt fand. (B.A. 13/38-39).

On the other hand, his very individuality means that he must be in some degree a lonely figure; he cannot - or will not - subordinate his own personality to the conventions of the community as a whole, and consequently he must remain outside, regarded with a good deal of suspicion and hostility by those whose companionship he has rejected.<sup>21</sup> Thus we have to assume that beneath the bluster and bravado of his outward behaviour, Wunnigel is essentially a vulnerable character, involved in a constant struggle which he has chosen to wage without allies. In such a situation he has to have some means of compensation in times of stress, and it is here that, in his view, his imaginative qualities come into their own: if he cannot confide in friends or find protection within a group of like-minded people, he can at least, by virtue of his imaginative abilities, construct an inner fantasy-world of his own where wrongs are put right and everyone is treated according to his deserts - or, to put it more sceptically, according to what Wunnigel himself believes to be their deserts. This is his refuge from the hostility of the philistines - to build in his imagination a world where he, and not they, can make the rules, where he, and not they, can call the tune and where he always triumphs over his enemies:

„Wissen Sie“, sagte er, „ich habe gottlob eine sehr

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21 In its main lines this situation is immediately reminiscent of many other such confrontations depicted by Raabe. Mention is made of some of these in Chapters II,1 and II,4 of this study.



lebhaftes Phantasie, und meine einzige Hilfe ist, jeden Tag zirka fünfundzwanzig von diesen grinsenden, behaglichen Philisterbestien überzulegen und ihnen fünfundzwanzig hintenauf zu zählen. Ohne dieses würde es mir vollständig unmöglich sein, so gelassen, wie ich es kann, mit der Menschheit zu verkehren!" (B.A. 13/100; whether the self-characterisation of the last sentence is accurate is, however, another question again).

In Wunnigel's own eyes, the role of his imagination is, then, assertive and protective: not only does it, so to speak, create his individuality in the first place, but it also provides for him a defence mechanism against the hostility of the outside world and in that way performs a useful therapeutic function.<sup>22</sup>

There is no doubt that, to some degree at least, this attitude to the role of Wunnigel's imagination is a valid one, and there is no real reason to reject his statement that a periodic retreat into his private fantasy-world has sometimes helped him to ride out the stresses of real life. If, however, as I suggested earlier, both the reader and the other characters see the role and effect of his imagination in rather a different light, then we must suspect that there is another side to it, that, in other words, Wunnigel's reliance on his intuition and inventiveness does not, after all, meet with the wholly positive results which, at any rate in the earlier stages of

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22 The therapeutic role of his imagination is recognised not only by Wunnigel himself but also by the narrator, who comments: „O ja, wenn einem höheren Staatsbeamten die Phantasie über die Verdrießlichkeiten und Drangsale des Lebens weghalf, so war's der Regierungsrat Wunnigel, vordem zu Königsberg am Pregel, und jetzt in Neapel am Tyrrhenischen Meere. Die Götter der Leichtlebigkeit wußten es; es gab selten einen Menschen mit solcher Genußfähigkeit für jeden der gegenwärtigen Momente und so radikalem Abweisungstalent für jegliche Dunkelheit und Wolkenansammlung des nächsten - von allen Zukunftssorgen, insofern sie sich auf Tage, Wochen, Jahre bezogen, ganz zu schweigen." (B.A. 13/101)

the novel, he claims.

In fact, the reader finds himself being drawn nearer and nearer to the conclusion that the main reason for Wunnigel's ultimate ruin does not lie in an unfortunate combination of external circumstances, as he continually claims, but rather in the excessive and increasing influence which his private fantasy-world comes to exert on his everyday social intercourse. This becomes particularly clear after his departure for Italy following the marriage of Weyland and Anselma. When the full account of his escapades in Italy becomes known, we realise that during the whole period of his stay there his behaviour has been characterised by a peculiar mixture of realism and fantasy:<sup>23</sup> he has been living, so to speak, on two levels at the one time. Even his letters betray this curious state of affairs: in the first one we find, sandwiched between passages of earthy realism on the one hand and self pity on the other (both characteristic of the "normal" Wunnigel), the ridiculous tale of the alleged hotel robbery,<sup>24</sup> a pitifully feeble attempt, as Wunnigel himself admits after his return home, to avoid responsibility for his own carelessness. Even more ludicrous is the claim in the second letter that his precipitate return is the result of his having been held up and robbed by "the notorious Borco di Pacco and his gang" (again an entirely fictitious episode).<sup>25</sup> In both cases Wunnigel takes refuge

23 Radcliffe makes a similar point in this regard (op. cit., p.338).

24 See B.A. 13/95-97.

25 B.A. 13/104. In the appendix to volume 13 of the Braunschweiger Ausgabe, Hans Fink explains (B.A. 13/410-11) that this name is simply a corruption of the Italian oath "Corpo di Bacco". In the light of this his suggestion that its use is a further hint by Raabe that the entire episode is fictitious, seems convincing.



in an imaginary situation in order to escape from the hard realities of real life, and the same considerations underly the arrangements he makes, by simulating suicide, to prevent his second wife from following him back to Germany.<sup>26</sup> Now these three incidents (or alleged incidents, as the case may be) are all rather fantastic, and it is unlikely that Wunnigel ever actually believes in their reality, but they are nevertheless important in terms of his psychology: in much the same way as his imaginary spanking of the philistines had helped him, as it were, to put them in their place and make them appear less menacing than they seemed in real life, so the fantastic tales he weaves and the pathetic subterfuges he adopts serve in a way as a barrier between his present consciousness on the one hand and past realities and their threatening consequences on the other. Once he has erected, as it were, a protective screen of fantasy, he feels he has put the unpleasant reality, and any consequences which might follow, behind him. In this connection it is important to note that the rather ridiculous actions I have just mentioned fulfil a protective rather than a deceptive function: they are not to be seen as the product of calculating schemes on the part of Wunnigel to wring some advantage out of those they affect, but are rather the last feeble weapon available to an intensely vulnerable individual in the face of the anonymous and hostile forces of the outside world; he is a prisoner of his own imagination and psychological needs rather than a Machiavellian manipulator of images and appearances. And it is this aspect of wilful yet subconscious self-deception which comes to dominate his actions and outlook to an ever-increasing degree, so

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26 See B.A. 13/128.

that latterly we gain the distinct impression that he is losing touch not only with the actual facts of day-to-day existence but even with the laws of probability. What had initially been little more than indulgence in harmless wishful thinking now leads step by step to Wunnigel's total and irreversible dependence on the products of his fertile but misleading fantasy. His imagination is beginning to take over from his common sense.

This impression is strongly confirmed by Wunnigel's dealings with the people he meets in Italy, particularly with his second wife and Sesamoff. In both cases he seems, as I suggested above, to be living on two different levels at the one time. He marries Oktavia in the full knowledge of what he is doing, but when, after a few days, he finds she is not the person he had imagined her to be, he takes flight (once again!), hoping thereby to put an end to the whole relationship; and when, having amassed an embarrassing pile of debts which he cannot pay off he arranges to sell Sesamoff some or all of the treasures of the Schloßberg, he seems to imagine that this mere promise - one which he knows he could not fulfil if called upon to do so - will in itself solve his immediate financial problems. In both of the instances quoted - and this is typical of his later behaviour - his actions, which are in themselves rational and unremarkable, are undertaken entirely without regard to their possible, probable or even inevitable consequences. Wunnigel is now living in a fantasy-world where cause and effect no longer have any meaning; the progressive influence of his imagination has brought him to a position where, having learned how to shut out reality for a time, he has allowed himself to become completely dominated by his inner dream world, to such an extent that he now lives as it were in



a vacuum, blissfully unaware of the context and consequences of his actions; he has been reduced to a state of almost complete solipsism.

Such a state of affairs would seem sad enough in itself, but for Wunnigel it is not the end of the story. Not only does he sink for a while into a world of childlike imagination and inconsequence; in the end, when the very consequences whose existence he had not reckoned with actually arise, he is forced to recognise both the futility of his flight into fantasy and the humiliating situation it has engendered. Even then, however, his instincts still lead him to react along similar lines, for, having failed in his search for a refuge from reality in the recesses of his own imagination, he is finally reduced to seeking physical shelter and refuge with old Brüggemann (whose house forms, significantly, part of the remains of the old town fortifications - a fortress of bricks and mortar where a stronghold of the mind had failed). The flight from reality in which the imaginative side of his nature had played such a large part is finally parodied, and laid bare in all its ultimate insufficiency, in the pathetic picture of Wunnigel cowering beneath the blankets in an effort to escape the rasping strictures of his outraged wife. In terms of social and personal relationships, then, Wunnigel's rampant imagination creates more problems than it solves; although for a time it helps him, or so he believes, to maintain a balanced view of life, it is ultimately the root cause of the degradation and humiliation he is shown to suffer towards the end of the novel, for in the long run it tempts him to ignore the claims of real life and to abandon any attempt to come to terms with his changed situation and with the people it brings him into contact with.

With this in mind, I should now like to look briefly at the second level on which Wunnigel's imagination is seen to function: the aesthetic interests which he develops under the influence of his creative impulses.

Wunnigel's aesthetic interests are concerned first and foremost with antiques; indeed the pursuit and acquisition of antique curios has become an overriding passion for him by the time the novel opens, and here too it is soon evident that in terms of its effect upon his perception and behaviour, this aspect of Wunnigel's personality is highly ambivalent. In some respects it is certainly a positive feature: his approach to antiques is both academic and artistic; he is well grounded in the subject, and at the same time can appreciate the individual objects from a purely aesthetic point of view; to that extent his interest in antiques is, therefore, a particular manifestation of his general artistic leanings. His attitude to the contents of the Schloßberg is, for example, on a completely different level from that of Weyland, and he claims to be able to feel for the objects in a way that Weyland, merely their ignorant owner,



cannot.<sup>27</sup> Despite these positive factors, however, it must be said that the over-all effect of Wunnigel's artistic interests is a negative one. One of the major reasons for this is, I think the level of intensity at which he exercises these interests, which become, as I said above, an overriding passion; indeed there comes a time when he can think of nothing else: even the health of his daughter (whose happiness and interests are, he claims, the sole purpose of his life)<sup>28</sup> is subordinated to whatever situation may prevail at any given time regarding the availability and quality of

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27 The contrasting attitudes of Weyland and Wunnigel towards the contents of the Schloßberg are well illustrated by the following passages. On the one hand, Weyland takes them for granted and is only mildly curious to find out what their contemporary value might be. Pondering his first impressions of Wunnigel, he muses: „Na, wenn ich es (mein Reich) i h m zeigen würde, so würde ich endlich einmal wohl ganz genau erfahren, was alles drin steckt. Das wäre ein Kerl, um ein Inventarium aufzunehmen und keinen Stiefelknecht und keinen Teekessel auszulassen.“ (B.A. 13/42) On the other hand, having broken Weyland's china cupboard and shattered all its contents while examining the wall-panelling behind it, Wunnigel seems almost affronted at Weyland's composure, protesting that the incident in question has cost him, the connoisseur, far greater shock than Weyland, the mere owner, and that Weyland is incapable of experiencing the trauma which he, Wunnigel, is now undergoing: „Mensch, Mensch, Sie waren nur der Besitzer, der Eigentümer der entzückenden Sammlung; - ich aber, ich war der Liebhaber, der Sachverständige! Fluchen möchte ich dem unwillkürlichen geschickten Seitensprünge, der mich dem Zerschmettertwerden entzogen hat! Blutige Tränen habe ich nicht bloß aus der Nase auf die Verwüstung geweint. Jeremias auf den Trümmern von Jerusalem war ein Hanswurst gegen mich. ... Schämen sollten Sie sich, Weyland, einem solchem Elend, einem derartigen unersetzlichen antiquarischen Schaden gegenüber so kühl, so kalt zu bleiben. Ich für mein Teil habe die Klingelschnur in der Verzweiflung abgerissen. Da liegt sie; und jetzt noch habe ich die größte Lust und Neigung, mich vermittelst derselben da an den Nagel zu hängen und in das reuelose, erinnerungsfreie Jenseits hinüberzuschleudern. Keinen größeren Schaden? - Sie sind ein ganz gefühlloser Mensch! Prügeln möchte ich mich, Sie, das ganze Weltall - vor allen Dingen aber mich, mich.“ (B.A. 13/84)

28 B.A. 13/37.

antiques in the area where they happen to be.<sup>29</sup> Small wonder that the narrator, whose choice of descriptive appellations for the various characters is discriminating and revealing throughout, feels justified in calling him „(den) antiquarischen Fanatiker.“<sup>30</sup> The inevitable result of all this is that Wunnigel's feeling for reality becomes distorted; through concentrating almost entirely on one interest, however absorbing or even deserving that interest may be, he is bound in the long run to sacrifice a balanced view of things, and to develop a distorted sense of priorities.

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29 The extent to which even Anselma's health is subordinated to Wunnigel's passion for antiques is illustrated by the fact that at the beginning, when he is keen to move on to a new area in search of new treasures, he virtually gives Weyland an ultimatum to have Anselma cured in two weeks (B.A. 13/34); on the other hand, after he has had an opportunity to examine the Schloßberg and assess the quality of its contents, he is adamant, in conversation with Weyland, that Anselma's health (which is by now much improved) will not permit them to leave the town for another month. (B.A. 13/58)

30 B.A. 13/59. Other similar appellations occur here and there, notably „der wunderliche alte juristische und antiquarische Emeritus und Benemeritus“ (B.A. 13/39) and - most strikingly - „der quecksilbrige Antiquitätenfanatiker“ (B.A. 13/57). Here as elsewhere Raabe makes copious use of circumlocutions rather than simple names when referring to individual characters. (cf. the same practice concerning Paul Ferrari, (pp.127-28 of this study). Usually this can be seen as a supplementary characterisation technique, highlighting some particular aspect of an individual's personality, either by heavy emphasis or by irony. Over thirty such circumlocutions are used in the case of Wunnigel, occurring in all over seventy times. Apart from a fairly sizeable number which do not fall readily into any grouping, three main categories emerge: one group emphasises his former professional and social standing, a second alerts us to the paternal obligations which he owes to Anselma (and which he so obviously neglects), and a third recalls his unpredictability and his passionate interest in antiques. Thus from this apparently minor aspect of presentation we are able to fit together, in rough form at least, a picture of Wunnigel's character and situation, including most of the elements necessary to an understanding of his case.



It is this sequence of events which leads to the sort of behaviour which, as we saw earlier, has been so indignantly condemned by some critics as egoistic, but in view of what we have already seen regarding the sources of Wunnigel's actions we have to ask at this point whether such a judgment is in fact justified. On balance I think it is not. I feel that, whatever else may be thought about Wunnigel, he is presented to us as an aesthetically sensitive individual. He may not be positively creative on his own account - he himself is not artistically productive - but at least he has enough sensitivity to appreciate quality in the products of other people, and sufficient imaginative facility to construct, in his own mind at any rate, images and situations which it would be quite beyond the capacity of his philistine acquaintances to evoke. But, having been endowed with one side of the artist's nature, he is also cursed with the other: for Wunnigel, as for the truly productive artist, art - and in his case the particular form of art represented by antiques - must become an obsession. He cannot but subordinate all other considerations to it, whatever his own desires in the matter might be.<sup>31</sup> He is, in other words, acting under compulsion, and for that reason I feel unable to concur with the moral condemnations of Klieneberger and Reuter. Although at first sight there may appear to be echoes of Molière's celebrated egoist Tartuffe

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31 In this connection Herman Meyer has argued - in my view, convincingly - that Wunnigel's apparent eccentricity is a product of his idealism concerning beautiful objects; his statement that Wunnigel's satirical mask covers „eine idealistische Begeisterung“ seems to me to get very close to the heart of the matter. (op. cit., p.268) Radcliffe too speaks of "a form of idealism, a compelling force which drives him, an abstract longing which has nothing to do with self-advancement in the career world." (op. cit., p.349)

in the character of Wunnigel, these remain, for the reasons stated, superficial, and do not touch the heart of the matter. The intuitive, irrational forces which dominate his personality to such a degree are undoubtedly the main sources of his eccentric behaviour, and it is, therefore, uncharitable as well as inaccurate to use the term egoism, at least as the basis for a moral judgment, in this context.<sup>32</sup>

The point I wish to emphasise is that the distorted view of things arising from Wunnigel's eccentric behaviour can and should be traced back to the imaginative or creative side of his nature as it expresses itself in his passion for antiques. In this regard it would, I think, be profitable finally to consider briefly the object of this passion and the importance which some of its characteristics possess in terms of his general attitude to the outside world. This in turn can serve to bring the two aspects of Wunnigel's character we have been examining - his social relationships and his aesthetic interests - together and help to formulate some sort of conclusion

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32 Here too, Meyer offers a more convincing explanation of Wunnigel's behaviour. He does not speak simply in terms of egoism, but of a ruthlessness on the part of Wunnigel in subordinating his own and Anselma's lives to monomaniac goals (op. cit., p.267). This description of the situation harmonises easily with the argument I have been suggesting concerning the compulsive nature of Wunnigel's actions. In addition it is worth quoting Meyer's final statement on Wunnigel, as it summarises clearly both Wunnigel's essential predicament and his ambivalent relationship to reality (that is to say, the fact, which I dealt with earlier in this Chapter, that he eventually comes to live on two entirely separate levels at the one time): "Wunnigel ist ein in Selbsttäuschung befangener, aber in dieser Befangenheit unbedingt wahrhafter Mensch." (op. cit. p.269) A similar view is taken by Radcliffe, who suggests that Wunnigel is "an individual who has been so fashioned by nature that he cannot conform to normal social patterns. His clash with society is preordained." (Radcliffe, op. cit., p.330)



concerning his significance in Raabe's over-all scheme of things.

It is surely of some consequence that Raabe chooses to have Wunnigel find an outlet for his creative impulses in the realm of antiques and not, for example, in painting or music, for this in itself implies an attempt to escape from the insecurity of present reality into a safer world where a man can pursue his private desires without fear of contradiction or disappointment. Leaving aside the question of aesthetic appreciation, which I have already touched upon, Wunnigel's interest is extended to antiques primarily as objects representative or symbolic of the past.<sup>33</sup> Although they may have some application to the present, by virtue of their still being usable or in working order, the attraction which they hold for him depends upon their ability to take his mind for a time off the cares and annoyances of the present and to focus his attention on an ideal illusory world from the past.<sup>34</sup> In the second place, they attract him simply as objects: because they are man-made and inanimate, with no independent existence, he is able to do with them as he pleases. He is the master and they, so to speak, are the servants. There can be no question of discussion or exchange of ideas such as

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33 It is also arguable that in associating Wunnigel with antiques and not some other more independently creative artistic interest, Raabe is, in a way, calling in question Wunnigel's claim to be regarded, so to speak, as a fully-fledged artist. It must be admitted at any rate that there is about Wunnigel a hint of the diletante, of the enthusiastic amateur rather than of the truly committed artist.

34 The fact that the opposition of present and past has a role to play here - though not a central role - is evidence of the complex interrelationship of themes in Raabe's later work. This aspect is isolated and examined in greater detail in Chapter II,3 of this study.

might be possible, say, between a portrait painter and his subject. Wunnigel has complete mastery over the objects of his interest and that is, in part at least, why his interest lies in that direction.

Wunnigel's interest in antiques offers him, then, a twofold alternative to the world he has been born into: it affords him, in the first instance, an escape-route into the past, and in the second, a refuge from the constant confrontation with other people and the world at large. How different from the attitude of Weyland, who in fact owns so many of the objects Wunnigel admires. The accumulated treasures of the Schloßberg mean virtually nothing to him; he has no idea of their individual commercial value, and they have next to no effect on his aesthetic sense, which is not nearly so finely tuned as Wunnigel's. To him they are simply objects he has been familiar with since earliest childhood and which enhance the comfort and amenity of his home. Indeed, the only durable effect which they have on his way of life stems not from any of the individual objects themselves, but from a quotation from Martial scratched on to a windowframe by one of his predecessors in 1598: "Dic mihi, si fias tu leo, qualis eris?"<sup>35</sup> The importance of this dictum is obvious from an early stage: the narrator reminds us of it from time to time, sometimes in an irritatingly naive manner, and finally its full meaning is paraded when Anselma asks Weyland what it means in German and he replies in the following terms:

"Hm - auf deutsch? Nun, das Ding rät jedermann an, sich erst vollständig in die Haut des anderen hineinversetzen zu lassen, ehe er es sich herausnehme, über dessen Natur, Stimmungen, Gefühle, Werke, Taten und Handlungen abzuurteilen." (B.A. 13/109)

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35 B.A. 13/12.



This is certainly a positive and challenging piece of advice and one which Weyland attempts to follow most of the time, especially in his dealings with Wunnigel,<sup>36</sup> but Anselma's subsequent plea that she and Weyland should both follow this advice with regard to Wunnigel and his odd ways finally seals the ironic contrast implied by Raabe: Wunnigel may well be able to bring an artistically authoritative eye to bear on the treasures of the Schloßberg, but it is difficult to imagine anyone whose life-style could be farther removed from the spirit of Martial's dictum than is his. He is so wrapped up in his own fantasies that he is unable to give a correct account of his own personality,<sup>37</sup> not to speak of any accurate insight into the feelings and attitudes of other people. He is a man of great talent and imagination who, despite his natural gifts, finds himself at a loss in the real world: in a way his type is a human parallel to the watch he is so proud of: „Eine seltene Merkwürdigkeit - Venediger Arbeit, aber als Zeitmesser gänzlich unzuverlässig." (B.A. 13/142)

How, then, are we to judge the effect of Wunnigel's imaginative and creative impulses, and what is their significance in terms of the novel as a whole? We have already looked in some detail at their

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36 Weyland's honest openmindedness is nowhere more explicitly conveyed than at his first meeting with Wunnigel, where he, as it were, forces himself to ask questions about the rather odd individual he has been speaking to rather than dismiss him out of hand as a mere eccentric: „Lernen wir auch diesen wunderlichen Kostänger an der Tafel des Daseins genauer kennen", sagte er sich. „Die Menschen stellen sich im Verkehr mit den Menschen nur zu häufig auf den falschen Standpunkt. Sie ärgern sich, wo sie sich ergötzen sollten; sie erboßen sich, anstatt zu lernen. Ist nicht schon die Frage interessant: wie kommt dieser Mensch, und zwar in Begleitung von Fräulein Tochter, in dieses abgelegene Wirtshaus?" (B.A. 13/29)

37 cf. pp.97-104 of this study.

influence on his social relationships and have seen that although his imagination does perform a useful therapeutic function, acting, as it were, as a safety-valve to reduce his fear and resentment of the philistines, its over-all effects are undeniably negative; once he allows his private world of fantasy to dominate his actions and outlook, he no longer has a firm hold on reality, and the consequences of his retreat from reality are extreme and - in his case - irreversible: complete mental, physical and social ruin. Part of his tragedy lies in the fact that, having given himself over so willingly and completely to the dictates of his imagination and of his creative impulses, he is unable to reorientate himself within the world of external reality even when, in the odd moment of insight, he realises that unless he does so he must perish. One such moment of insight is recorded in his first letter from Italy, where he writes:

„Einer der Burschen von Eurem Riedhorn wäre imstande, die philosophische Bemerkung zu machen, die ich Euch jetzt nicht vorenthalten kann, und wenn es mich mein Leben kosten würde, nämlich, daß es irgend einmal mit allen Schwärmereien, Neigungen und Liebhabereien zu Ende geht in der Welt.“<sup>38</sup>

Does Raabe himself echo this observation? Is he pointing out, in his characterisation of Wunnigel, the inevitable disillusionment and misery that await the imaginative outsider? When we look solely at Wunnigel, it certainly seems so: here we have a man of high social and intellectual standing utterly cast down because of the increasing dominance in his personality of unrestrained imaginative and

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<sup>38</sup> B.A. 13/97. Despite this, however, he is ultimately unable to renounce the escape into fantasy, and continues: „Was ich Euch rate, ist, daß Ihr die Eurigen so lange warm haltet als möglich: habe es ebenfalls so gemacht!“ (ibid).



creative elements, and we sometimes get the impression that in the figure of Wunnigel, Raabe is suggesting that there is some sort of causal connection between creativity and instability. Indeed, it almost seems as if Raabe, by creating a character of such substance and promise and yet finally having even him defeated by the very factors making for his individuality, were determined to demonstrate once and for all the futility of any projected escape into fantasy. Such an interpretation may well apply to the character of Wunnigel himself - and in that context I am convinced that it is valid - but when we widen our horizon to consider Raabe's attitude to the imaginative outsider as it is presented in the novel as a whole, we must proceed with a certain amount of caution. Wunnigel himself is, to be sure, the central character, but he is not the only figure of importance, and before passing final judgment on Raabe's attitude to the sort of personality he represents, it is as well to look briefly at the position of the other imaginative outsider in the novel: Wenzel Brüggemann.

There are indeed certain striking similarities between Brüggemann and Wunnigel: like Wunnigel, Brüggemann was at one time a man of considerable social standing - as Städtischer Rottmeister and the owner of a prosperous watchmaker's business he had once been one of the leading citizens in the town, held in high esteem by his fellows; like Wunnigel he is a man of creativity and imagination, set apart by these qualities from most of his acquaintances; but like Wunnigel he gives his imagination too free rein - he neglects the more mundane but commercially necessary tasks of simple watch and clock repair and spends more and more of his time on ingenious and fantastic but seldom practicable projects of his own imagination.

In particular we are told of his abortive and almost fatal attempt to construct a moving machine independent of horses or mechanical power,<sup>39</sup> and of the fairy castle, complete with mobile figures, which he makes for the young Heinrich Weyland as a Christmas present. In consequence most of his business reverts to less gifted but more practical competitors and he is eventually declared bankrupt.

Brüggemann shares, then, certain characteristics with Wunnigel, and these are important enough to establish a basic affinity between them: they are fundamentally the same sort of personality, and this is appreciated by all the major figures in the novel - Anselma goes to Brüggemann for advice after receiving Wunnigel's first letter because she believes they are both of the same type and understand one another;<sup>40</sup> Weyland later confirms his wife's intuition from a more professional point of view;<sup>41</sup> and Wunnigel himself is in no doubt that they are temperamentally and socially almost identical:

„Es gibt eben Wege, auf denen nur Leute unseres Schlages etwas zu suchen haben und gewöhnlich auch manches finden, Rottmeister Brüggemann. ... Sie sind der Rottmeister außer Dienst Brüggemann, und ich bin der Regierungsrat außer Dienst Wunnigel, und alte K i n d e r sind wir beide, ich will das herzlich gern zugeben...." (B.A. 13/116)

The similarities between Wunnigel and Brüggemann are, then, certainly far-reaching, and are important in themselves; there are, however, also contrasts which, from the point of view of Raabe's attitude in the novel as a whole, are at least as important.

One of these contrasts concerns the nature of their creativity.

39 B.A. 13/51-52.

40 B.A. 13/94.

41 B.A. 13/122.



The creative side of Wunnigel's personality is, as I stated above,<sup>42</sup> largely passive, or appreciative; he is able to judge quality in a work of art, but his creativity does not extend to independent production. He could, I suppose, be more accurately described as aesthetically rather than artistically gifted. With Brüggemann, however, things are rather different: his creativity is much more positive, more productive. To be sure, many of his ideas never reach the stage of practical execution, simply because they are too fantastic, but his imagination is not completely divorced from reality, as Wunnigel's is, and in addition to the complete mastery he exercises over his craft, he is able to produce complicated and ingenious pieces of machinery such as the Christmas presents he makes for Weyland and, many years later, for his children.

Secondly, Brüggemann's imagination, and the hold it gains over him, do not reduce him to a state of practically unrelieved solipsism, as happens with Wunnigel; the mental and physical degeneration so evident in Wunnigel's case does not affect him at all. Despite his undoubted individuality, indeed eccentricity, he makes a point of staying in contact with his friends in the town, even into his old age. Thus he remains aware of changing situations and characters and retains a vital hold on the reality of the outside world, despite the manifold beckonings of his imagination. It is probably for this reason that his house, situated as it is at the former town gate, becomes a focal point for casual acquaintances and closer friends alike, and it surely says something for Brüggemann's shrewd clear-sightedness and reliability of judgment that he becomes

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<sup>42</sup> See p. 107 of this study.

the trusted confidant and confessor not only of Wunnigel but of Weyland and Anselma as well.<sup>43</sup>

The third important difference between Brüggenmann and Wunnigel concerns their relationship to the past. We have already seen how Wunnigel, through his consuming interest in antiques, attempts in a way to escape into the past, and at first sight the same seems to be true of Brüggenmann: the narrator tells us that he belongs just as much to the past as the house he lives in,<sup>44</sup> and it is explicitly stated that his great days as Rottmeister and respected craftsman lie forty or fifty years in the past;<sup>45</sup> even the fact that after his bankruptcy he had been moved into an ancient little house adjacent to the remains of the long obsolete town wall might be interpreted as an indication that he too is to be seen as living in the past. Despite this, however, I feel that such a conclusion is unjustified, and that he should be seen not as living in the past or attempting to take refuge in it but as forming a vital and viable link between the past and the present. He is able to apply the experience of his long life (he is over ninety by the time Wunnigel appears on the scene) to the problems of the present by virtue of the alert interest he takes in younger generations and contemporary events: „Neunzig

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43 cf. B.A. 13/50. The strategic situation of Brüggenmann's house and his openness towards the changing reality of the outside world are also indicated by some of the circumlocutions used by Raabe when referring to him (cf. p.106, Note 30 above, concerning the use of the same technique with regard to Wunnigel). Some of these, such as „das alte Herrchen am Untertor (B.A. 13/116, 117) „das Rottmeisterchen in dem Hause am Untertor" (B.A. 13/167) and „der neunzigjährige Freund und Besitzer des Hauses am Untertor" (B.A. 13/49-50) are highly revealing in this respect.

44 See B.A. 13/50: „Gott erhalte uns beide, trotzdem daß sie beide der Vergangenheit angehören...."

45 B.A. 13/50.



Jahre alt wird nicht ein jeder, und noch weniger hält sich jeder, der's einmal ausnahmsweise wird, so munter dabei wie der Alte am Tor." (B.A. 13/49) In this respect too he has to be seen in a much more positive light than Wunnigel.

Finally I want to mention one other difference, which in a sense encompasses the three I have just listed. It is this: Raabe's whole approach to Brüggemann seems different in essence from his approach to Wunnigel; each is enclosed, as it were, in a different atmosphere from the other. Whereas Wunnigel is ironised and sometimes even caricatured,<sup>46</sup> Brüggemann is treated throughout with light good humour. Raabe seems to reserve his mockery predominantly for Wunnigel while depicting Brüggemann's faults and virtues almost with affection and fellow-feeling, and here, I believe, lies a key to the understanding of Raabe's underlying purposes in writing Wunnigel. It will be readily appreciated that these important differences in character between Wunnigel and Brüggemann, existing as they do within the context of a basic affinity, hold far-reaching implications as regards Raabe's underlying attitude to the problem of the imaginative

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<sup>46</sup> In this context, Barker Fairley's attitude to the character of Wunnigel (see p.91, Note 12, above) is justifiable. Nevertheless, I still maintain that the novel as a whole has an obviously serious purport which it is worth considering seriously.

outsider in Wunnigel.<sup>47</sup> I believe, in fact, that Raabe approaches the problem on two different levels, and that these can be isolated by reference to his attitude to the two main characters we have been examining. In the figure of Wunnigel we see, as it were, a personalisation of his conviction that an excessive reliance on the imagination will inevitably prove to be not liberating but constricting, and will hinder, not help the individual in his attempts to come to terms with his own situation in the world of reality. If this view is correct, then the creation of Wunnigel must have involved a great deal of agonised heart-searching on the part of Raabe, who must have seen in this character the dangers to which he himself, as a creative artist in real life, felt constantly exposed. Nevertheless he continued to present Wunnigel with ironic mockery right to the end of the book, presumably on the basis that such an approach would best serve to clarify the conviction which he felt compelled to express. In a sense, then, the characterisation of Wunnigel represents the didactic or objective side of the novel, and

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47 Strangely, the important differences between Wunnigel and Brüggemann have gone unnoticed by some critics. Even Hans Finck, in his otherwise excellent appendix to Wunnigel in volume 13 of the Braunschweiger Ausgabe seems to see only similarities when he comments: „Raabe wollte an der Gestalt Wunnigels und der ihr zugesellten Nebenfigur des Rottmeisters und Tausendkünstlers Brüggemann (V b g e l a u s e i n e m N e s t, S.94, 33) die Gefahren aufzeigen, die den bedrohen, der zu stark im Banne seiner Phantasie steht und die Welt deshalb nicht richtig einzuschätzen weiß, so daß er im Leben scheitert: den P h a n t a s t e n." (B.A. 13/395) Such an interpretation is certainly valid with respect to Wunnigel himself, but its application to Brüggemann is not consistent either with his role in the novel or with the atmosphere with which Raabe chooses to surround him. In his study of the figure of the eccentric, Radcliffe does comment on various differences between the characterisation of Wunnigel and that of Brüggemann (op.cit., pp.344-46) without, however, going on to deal specifically with the implications of these observations.



if that were all we had to concern ourselves with, there would be no doubt as to our general conclusion: we should be able to state, without fear of contradiction, that in Wunnigel Raabe constantly and courageously exposes the dangers of allowing the imagination to dominate the personality and to determine behaviour, and that he suggests very strongly that there is some sort of organic link between artistic creativity and personal instability.

Yet no one who has read the book with an open mind can confine himself to that reaction for, as I stated earlier, Wunnigel, although the central character, is not the sole focus of interest, and when we consider Raabe's approach to the figure of Brüggemann, it soon becomes clear that we are dealing with quite a different phenomenon. As we have seen, Brüggemann is altogether a more positive character than Wunnigel: he is productively creative, he has succeeded in maintaining a firm hold on reality while at the same time enjoying the fruits of his creative ability, and he is thus able to forge a valuable link between past and present. Indeed, he is presented in such a positive fashion that I do not think it unreasonable to suggest that he in turn can be regarded as an externalisation of a temptation felt by Raabe, and to which he succumbed, to imply that it is, after all, possible to establish a viable and healthy working relationship between the demands of external reality and the soothing comforts of the imagination, that the creative individual need not, after all, be exposed to dangers he cannot overcome, and that an escape into fantasy is possible and indeed desirable. It seems to me that in presenting Brüggemann, who is, it must be remembered, just as important a representative of the claims of the imagination as Wunnigel, in a more moderate and therefore more acceptable light,

Raabe is hinting that having recourse to the escape offered by the imagination is in some circumstances still the best way of dealing with a hostile environment, that it is, to put it in another context, a viable and necessary refuge for those who reject society or whom society rejects. Raabe seems to be drawing back from the conclusions implied in the character of Wunnigel; it is as if he were unable or unwilling at this point finally to come to terms with the implications of his insight, and were attempting instead to construct, through the figure of Brüggemann, some sort of counterfeit solution or sham synthesis;<sup>48</sup> and in this connection it seems to me that he must shoulder some degree of criticism. It is all very well for Raabe to present us with the figure of an imaginative individualist who, despite earlier failures in business and social life, has retained his hold on the realities of the outside world, to the extent that he is regarded as a sort of father confessor by people two or even three generations his junior; but within the context of a novel such as this we have to ask ourselves: is such a situation likely to arise in real life? Can we accept the authenticity of what Brüggemann apparently represents? And, whether or not that is possible, what effect does this powerful counterweight

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48 This interpretation is supported by an examination of one or two changes made by Raabe between what remains of an earlier draft and the final version. (This concerns only the last four pages of the novel, for which we do have an earlier draft still extant). For the most part, the changes made by Raabe (cf. Finck B.A. 13/396-97) give the final version a rather more peaceful, harmonious tone than that of the earlier draft. (This is true in particular of his presentation of the death of Brüggemann). Finck's final comment: ".....das ganze Werk (wird) mit der Stimmung eines völligen Friedens abgeschlossen" (B.A. 13/397) reflects the retreat to which Raabe seems to have had recourse between first conceiving the figure of Wunnigel and ultimately finding himself face to face with its harrowing implications.



exercise on the validity and conviction of the implications surrounding the characterisation of Wunnigel? It must be admitted that in terms of the novel itself no satisfactory answers to these questions are forthcoming. In a sense, the creation of Brüggemann, and the crucial role he is given, suggest a degree of wishful thinking on Raabe's part, and must involve Raabe himself in the very escape into fantasy which he seems to be warning against so explicitly in the central character of the novel. We have to conclude that in this his first serious probing of the ethos and essence of the imaginative outsider, he stops short of a clear and decisive delineation of the issues involved; the evident condemnation of Wunnigel is called in question, and qualified, in part at least, by Raabe's equally apparent sympathy with Brüggemann. The whole problem, as presented in Wunnigel, remains largely unresolved; Raabe's attitude to it is characterised not by studied ambivalence arising from an awareness of the complexity of the issues, but rather by obscurity and haziness born of indecision and hesitation. Nevertheless, even the novel's undeniable shortcomings are not entirely negative in their effects, for, in this case at least, they allow us a rather clearer insight into Raabe's own feelings, into his convictions, doubts and hesitations, than would have been possible in a more ruthlessly executed, homogeneous work. And it is important too to remember that this is, after all, the first occasion on which Raabe addressed himself seriously and exclusively to the problem of the imaginative outsider; although the ground-work and preparation involved in its composition did not come to full fruition immediately, their germinal effect on later works, where the questioning is carried farther and the tensions are more clearly articulated, is

unmistakable. The patterns which are indicated only hazily in Wunnigel (1876) are recreated with increasing clarity and confidence in Deutscher Adel (1877) and the works following after it; but the all-important first step was taken here. For these reasons Wunnigel deserves our careful consideration; in the light of what it has revealed I should like now to examine, in rather less detail, the development of Raabe's approach to the escape into fantasy as it is presented in Deutscher Adel and in his later work.

(ii) Developments in later novels

Although Raabe began work on Deutscher Adel only a few days after completing Wunnigel, the two books are rather dissimilar both in setting and tone. Whereas most of the action in Wunnigel takes place in a medium-sized but unspecified town steeped in historical associations, the interest in Deutscher Adel is centred in the main on the life of a group of characters in the noise, bustle and dynamism of Berlin at the time of the Franco-Prussian War; and although Raabe evidently intended to write in similar vein to Wunnigel, the tone of the later novel is quite different, in that Deutscher Adel has very little of the irony and humour by which its immediate predecessor is remembered. There are, of course, occasions where Raabe endeavours to introduce an element of humour, but for the most part these are either fleeting and ineffectual (for example the various appellations applied to Frau Achtermann and Louis Butzemann) or obviously contrived and clumsy (such as the "debate" in Chapter 4 between the narrator and the reader as to who should tell the story; significantly, the narrator refers to himself at this point as „der



deutsche Humorist").<sup>49</sup> Over the whole length of the novel, Raabe fails to sustain the manner or level of humour so successfully evoked in Wunnigel; instead he has produced a narrative which cannot honestly be described as entertaining but which also falls short of commanding the reader's interest on another level. It is neither essentially comic nor purely tragic, but whereas Wunnigel can properly and positively be described as tragicomic,<sup>50</sup> it would not be accurate to apply even that designation to Deutscher Adel. I feel its tone is best described as an uneasy mixture of pretentious rhetoric, clumsy humour and - some of the time - penetrating psychological insight; in other words, Raabe had something important to say, but he went about it in an unsatisfactory way, and the result, in terms of creative fiction, is rather disappointing. Nevertheless, Deutscher Adel remains a highly relevant novel from the point of view of this study, both by virtue of its following so closely on the completion of Wunnigel (for in some respects it answers questions which the earlier novel does not deal with satisfactorily), and of the fact that it too, having as its dominant theme the question of the imaginative outsider, occupies a key position with regard to one of the central concerns of Raabe's mature work. For these reasons I want briefly to consider the significance of some of its main characters.

Raabe seems to have changed his mind at least twice as to who is to be seen as the central character. In the beginning he seems to

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49 B.A. 13/194.

50 Hans Finck sees at least the ultimate fate of Wunnigel himself in this light: „Wunnigel ... nimmt ein tragikomisches Ende.“ (B.A. 13/395)

have been interested primarily in Achtermann, whose role he modified substantially between the first draft and the final version, and at one time he had in mind another character, who eventually developed into Wedehop, as the central figure illustrating what he wanted to express in the novel.<sup>51</sup> I think, however, that when we look dispassionately at the book in the form in which it was published, the most striking character must be not Achtermann or Wedehop but Paul Ferrari.

From the outset it is noticeable that there are distinct parallels between the character and situation of Wunnigel and those of Ferrari. Like Wunnigel he is an eccentric, an outstanding and self-confident individualist who, however, eventually dies in pathetic circumstances, having undergone the same process of physical and mental degeneration. Like Wunnigel, he goes through a period of intense and bitter disillusionment, which leaves him shattered in mind and body; even the casual description of his appearance on returning to Berlin, and the implied comparison with his former demeanour are very reminiscent of certain passages in Wunnigel:

„Ah - was?!" sagte auch Paul Ferrari, mit rotunterlaufenen Augen auf die beiden eben eingetretenen Männer starrend.  
.../...

Es war ein einstmals unbedingt außergewöhnlich hübsches und feines Gesicht, aus welchem der Mann mit dem eleganten Bettelmannsstock die grauen Locken zurückstrich.

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51 cf. B.A. 13/435-38, where Karl Hoppe deals with these aspects of the composition of Deutscher Adel in illuminating detail.



Dazu strich er im gleichen Augenblick mit der Hand durch die Luft wie jemand, der viele von jeder Seite Zudrängende abzuwehren sucht....

(Achtermann) reichte die zuckende Hand hin, und der heimgekehrte Schulfreund sah ihn mit seinen kranken Augen eine geraume Weile an, ehe er diese brave, furchtsame Hand hastig griff. ..."<sup>52</sup>

Why should Ferrari find himself in such a situation? When we attempt to answer that question, we soon become aware of further similarities between him and Wunnigel: Ferrari too has a high degree of natural intelligence, and impressive imaginative powers, and as with Wunnigel it is the imaginative, creative side of his nature that become dominant; he is by far the most talented person we come across in the novel, but because he lets his creative talent run away with him, his ambitious projects and the vision of the future which they conjure up blot out everything of a more mundane nature, and so like Wunnigel before him, he gradually loses contact with external reality until the disillusionment and despair brought about by the perpetual failure of his fantastic schemes set him on the final stages of his retreat from the world and he sinks into a state approaching madness.<sup>53</sup> Of all the other characters, only Wedehop is either astute or explicit enough to go beyond general expressions of

52 B.A. 13/227. cf. p.96, Note 20, above, where Wunnigel's mental and psychological development is indicated by similar means.

53 In his letter to Wedehop, Achtermann uses the word "verrückt" of Ferrari. (".....e r i s t v e r r ü c k t ! Ich schreibe und unterstreiche das mit Schauder und Beben! Er ist bankerott an Leib und Seele, ...." (B.A. 13/252), and some of the circumlocutions used by the narrator in referring to Ferrari add support to the view that he is, if not actually insane, then not far removed from such a state: cf. pp. 127-28 below, and B.A. 13/263, where the narrator refers to "sein ruiniertes Nervensystem."

sympathy and regret towards a more realistic diagnosis of Ferrari's tragedy:

„Deine tausend Künste und Wissenschaften haben dir auch in Amerika nichts genutzt. Das Pulver hast du leider nur zuviel erfunden; einmal genügt die Entdeckung, und daß die Amerikaner auf dein letztes Phantasma, dein neues, die Verdauung regelndes und den Appetit schärfendes Universalpulver nicht anleckten, habe ich im voraus gewußt. ... Wie häufig hast du wohl in deinem Leben die Wimpel nach dem Glück wehen lassen, Paule, und bist zu Schiffe gestiegen mit einem Bestallungsbrief für die Statthalterschaft von Eldorado in der Tasche? Nicht wahr, für so eine Art von Genie haben wir uns immer gehalten? Und deshalb verließen wir uns in Gottes und des Teufels Namen auf den alten Zauber, welcher dergleichen Hanswürste mit den Kindern und den Betrunknen auf eine Stufe stellt, sie auf die Schulter patscht und beruhigend sagt: Fallt nur, so oft ihr wollt, man wird euch schon wieder aufhelfen?" (B.A. 13/230)

It might be objected that it is unreasonable to base an assessment of one figure on what another says about him, but quite apart from the fact that Wedehop as, so to speak, the arch-disillusioner in the novel, carries an authority lacking in the pronouncements of the other characters, Raabe makes his own position about Ferrari abundantly clear by other less obvious techniques. Even such a small point as the description of his walking-stick contributes to a clarification of his nature: „.....seltsamerweise ein Ebenholzstückchen mit feinziseliertem goldenen Knopf - ein Bettelmannsstab grimmigster Sorte...." (B.A. 13/227) It is just the sort of walking-stick that Ferrari, with his predilection for refinement and individuality, would choose. On the purely pragmatic level it suggests a measure of decadence in his nature, but its very form and composition also stimulate reactions regarding his relationship to external reality: when we consider the walking-stick in relation to Ferrari's pathetic situation, his personal helplessness and the fatal inevitability of his position become all the clearer.



We have here a man who, by virtue simply of the way he is made, needs support, and while he can gain physical support by the use of his walking-stick, the very factors which impelled him to buy that walking-stick rather than a more utilitarian, functional type, ensure that his quest for self-fulfilment will end in failure and ruin.

More weighty than this relatively insignificant point of detail are, however, the different appellations by which the narrator refers to Ferrari without actually or only using his name. This is a practice very typical of Raabe, who employs it normally in order to highlight some significant facet of a character's personality or situation,<sup>54</sup> as, for example, when the dour, taciturn Louis Butzemann is described, in ironic vein, as „der freundliche Jüngling.“<sup>55</sup> In Ferrari's case the narrator has recourse to almost thirty such circumlocutions, and when they are divided up into various groups, a clear picture both of Ferrari's inherent qualities and of his wider situation emerges. I think that, leaving aside a few isolated examples, three general aspects can be distinguished which, when taken together, confirm the impressions gained earlier about the sort of man he is and the influence which his imagination exerts on his development. In the first place his inventions and talents are emphasised in phrases such as „der Pulvererfinder“ (B.A. 13/264), „der arme, vielfindige Paul“ (B.A. 13/257) and others; a second group recalls the years of self-imposed exile undertaken in pursuance of a

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54. Other examples of Raabe's practice in this respect are discussed elsewhere in this study, in particular on p.39, Note 24; pp.182-85 and Notes 49-54; and pp.301-4, and Note 31. See also Notes 30 and 43 of this Chapter.

55 B.A. 13/300.

vision which proved to be just a mirage, and the consequent neglect of his responsibilities as Natalie's father ("der Papa Ferrari", B.A. 13/266, 310 - in the context, the implication I suggested is clear; "der heimgkehrte Schulfreund", B.A. 13/227; "der Kommissionsrat Senor Pablo", B.A. 13/296; and even "Mr. Paul Ferrari", B.A. 13/258); finally, a third group calls to mind the essential instability of his nature, and the apathetic situation which he now finds himself in ("der kranke, unzurechnungsfähige Mann", B.A. 13/257; "der weinerliche, eigensinnige, zusammengefallene Mann", B.A. 13/258; "der nervenranke Mann", B.A. 13/285; "der Verwirrte", B.A. 13/285). Most revealing of all, however, are those phrases which draw together strands from the first and the third groups, thereby illustrating the causal connection between Ferrari's predominantly imaginative disposition and the temperamental instability which goes along with it ("sein leider zu talentreicher Schulgenosse", B.A. 13/282; "der kranke Mann mit den vielen Talenten", B.A. 13/287; "der arme Teufel und Pulvererfinder", B.A. 13/257). In the context in which they appear, such phrases suggest that it is impossible to live at an intense degree of imaginative activity, as Ferrari does constantly, without eventually losing one's hold on reality and thereafter falling into a position of undiluted self-delusion.

There are, then, despite the obvious differences in presentation, clear and important parallels between the characterisation of Wunnigel and that of Ferrari: both men are gifted with a high degree of intelligence and imagination, but once the latter has asserted itself as the dominant force in their personalities, there follows a period of self-delusion and degeneration, marked by an



apparent abrogation of all family and social responsibility, and continuing until what can only be described as the release of death. In both cases Raabe seems to be suggesting a definite connection between creativity and instability, and between imagination and self-delusion. Indeed, the similarities are so strong that we must assume, as I suggested at the beginning of this Chapter,<sup>56</sup> that Raabe had become so preoccupied with the problem of the imaginative outsider that he felt he had somehow to make a major effort to come to grips with it and thereby, as it were, to write the whole thing out of his system. As it reappears in a more or less prominent position in several of his later novels we can deduce that he did not entirely succeed in this, but the fact remains that at the time he wrote it, Deutscher Adel (1877) was important to Raabe as a vehicle for testing, and rejecting, confirming or perhaps even carrying farther the insights he had sensed in Wunnigel (1876). If, in the light of these considerations, we were to look at the figure of Ferrari in isolation, then it would certainly seem as if Raabe had indeed overcome the hesitations so evident in Wunnigel, and had illustrated in Deutscher Adel, sympathetically but clearly and outspokenly, the inevitable dangers lying in wait for the imaginatively motivated individual. But here too, when we look at the novel as a whole, we have to admit that it is not so.

The fact is that, in similar fashion to Wunnigel, Raabe does not depict Ferrari as the sole representative of the imaginative approach to life; indeed, of the principal characters, only Wedshop, and possibly Natalie, do not avail themselves of their imaginative

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<sup>56</sup> See p. 89-90 of this study.

capacities in order to construct now and then a barrier against the often overwhelmingly harsh realities of life. For Achtermann this takes the form of an escape into the wholly imaginative but highly attractive realm of books. The lending library he owns is not just his profession; it is also his main recreation and a necessary place of refuge where he can forget for a time the worrying political situation and - more to the point as far as he is concerned - the countless little domestic miseries heaped on him by his wife and his daughter;<sup>57</sup> without the opportunity of absorbing himself in the world of fiction he might, it is suggested, have found the pressures of the real world too great:

Es öffnen wahrlich nicht alle, die eine Tür hinter sich zuziehen, eine andere, die in ein unbeschränktes Reich der Wunder, der Märchen und des Behagens führt und das alte Zauberwort: „Hinter mir Nacht, vor mir Tag!“ ganz und gar wahr macht! ---

Der Leihbibliothekar Karl Achtermann war Leihbibliothekar aus Beruf. „Wenn er nicht solch ein Phantastikus wäre, hätte er es auch gar nicht so lange ausgehalten!“ sagte die Nachbarschaft, und ein Körnlein Wahrheit mochte auch hier wohl der öffentlichen Meinung zum Grunde liegen.<sup>58</sup>

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57 Ullmann (op.cit., pp.148-49) describes Achtermann's lending-library as a sanctuary („eine Asylstätte“). He sees the "concept of refuge" („der Asylgedanke“) as central to Raabe's attitude to reality, and compiles a list of nineteen so-called "sanctuaries", not all of them places to which I should wish to attribute the function he assumes they fulfil. (When, for example, he includes the room from which Bräggemann maintains contact with the outside world, it appears that he has misunderstood the function and significance certainly of that character). Nevertheless, his statement: „Das sind die Asyle, in die sich die Menschen vor der Welt zurückziehen, um bestehen zu können.“ (op.cit., p.149) can properly be applied to Achtermann's lending-library.

58 B.A. 13/180. Echoes of this are found here and there, especially in earlier parts of the novel, in individual phrases or sentences, of which the following are representative: „Sämtliche Romantik der zwanzigtausend Bände seiner Bibliothek kam nicht gegen die Öde in seinem Leibe und die Leere in seiner Seele auf.“ (B.A. 13/206); „das Reich der Romantik, soweit es in den Büchern gedruckt stand“ (B.A. 13/219); and a reference to Achtermann as „einer der berufensten Minister des Auswärtigen aller Herrscher von und in Traumland.“ (B.A. 13/210).



In the form it takes and the function it fulfils for Achtermann, the escape into fantasy is, then, seen in a predominantly positive light.

The only two principal characters whom I have not mentioned so far - Ulrich Schenck and his mother - also seek solace from time to time in their imaginative fancy, and they too feel that this is of some benefit to them in facing up to the rigours of daily life.

Writing to his mother from the front-line in the Franco-Prussian War, Ulrich comments that they are lucky to have this ability -

„Welch ein Glück ist es doch, daß wir beide, Du und ich, zu allen unsern Erlebnissen und Erfahrungen die nötige Phantasie, und zwar in der Richtung auf das Sonnige hin, auf die Welt mitgebracht haben!“ (B.A. 13/199) -

and there is, I think, no doubt either that Ulrich and his mother do indulge in this periodic escape into the imagination or that, in terms of their ability to cope with life, they are portrayed as being the better for it.

As far as the role and influence of the imagination is concerned, it is clear, then, not only that several important characters in Deutscher Adel have recourse from time to time to their own private worlds of fantasy as a bulwark against the trials and problems of everyday existence, but also that Raabe intends them to be regarded favourably for just that reason. They share the positive aspects of Wunnigel's or Ferrari's imagination - the facility to see beyond the here and now, and to conjure up life of a sort where none existed beforehand - without sinking into the fateful solipsism which befalls these two unfortunate individuals. The difference lies in their ability to retain sufficient contact with external reality despite their periodic excursions into fantasy - a characteristic which, it will be recalled, is also fundamental to the personality

of Brüggemann. In the opinion of Wedehop, what separates Ferrari from his more fortunate compatriots is the almost arrogant trust he had placed in the infallibility of his own individual vision, a trust which implied that he could live quite happily on the basis of his own intuition, without regard to the claims of society or even to plain common sense. In this passage he is outlining the essential difference between Ferrari and Achtermann, but the point he makes is equally valid for any of the characters we have been considering:

„Vögel aus demselben Nest der Lebensharmlosigkeit,  
nur daß den einen sein phantastisches Gefieder  
allzuleicht zu hoch über den gesunden Menschen-und  
Philisterverstand hinaustrug.“ (B.A. 13/216)

It is clear from what we have just seen that, as in Wunnigel, so also in Deutscher Adel the problem of the imaginative outsider is presented on two levels, either of which can be isolated by reference to one or other of the principal characters. On the one hand we have the genuinely pathetic figure of Ferrari who can rightly be interpreted as a warning against the tempting lures of the imagination; in him, as in Wunnigel, it is possible to see, so to speak, the didactic or objective side of the novel. On the other hand, in the less eccentric, more acceptable characters such as Achtermann, Ulrich Schenck and Frau Schenck Raabe seems once again to be suggesting that it is, after all, possible, indeed desirable, to achieve a happy synthesis between accepting the claims of reality and enjoying the fruits of the imagination. If anything, this idea is more directly expressed in Deutscher Adel than in Wunnigel: it is not only personalised in some of the main characters, but also formulated explicitly by the narrator on several occasions. At one point, for example, speaking of the satisfaction Achtermann and Natalie enjoy in



the world of books, he goes on:

....und die alte Magie, der Zauber der Phantasie, der vom Anfang an einzig und allein den Menschen in der Welt festhält, die holde, bunte Lüge, die liebe Zwillingschwester der Wahrheit, trat wieder ihre volle Herrschaft an, pour corriger la fortune und der bitteren Wirklichkeit die Volte zu schlagen. (B.A. 13/283);

and again, at a later stage commenting on the role of the imagination in the lives of Ulrich Schenck and his mother, he states:

Wir wären oder würden allesamt wahnsinnig, wenn es uns nicht gegeben wäre, im ewigen Sturm, der uns umtreibt, dann und wann an Windstille zu glauben und das, was nie ist und sein kann, für ein Wirkliches zu nehmen.<sup>59</sup>

In all of this, Raabe seems to be arguing against the view of life suggested in the uncompromising characterisation of Ferrari. It is all very well to say that the imagination and the world of fantasy can and do have a useful role to play in certain circumstances and under certain conditions, but where are we to draw the line between reasonable self-indulgence and dangerous addiction? I feel that, as in Wunnigel, Raabe has grasped with the utmost clarity the problem of the imaginative outsider, and has tried to present it in all its stark reality, but has at the same time felt unable to come to terms completely with the implications of what was emerging and has therefore attempted to shy away from it, to relativise what he had to say by the creation of more moderate representatives of the imaginative approach to life. While it is true in one respect to say, as Hans Finck does: „....in seiner vollen Tragik tritt das

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59 B.A. 13/295. cf. the narrator's further comment: „Wie groß würde wohl unter den Menschen die Kindersterblichkeit sein, wenn das Märchen nicht dem Menschen als Ersatz für die neun Leben gegeben wäre, welche die alte Mutter nicht bloß den Katzen, sondern allen ihren andern Kindern auf den Weg mitgeben will?!" (B.A. 13/278).

Thema des an der Wirklichkeit des Daseins scheiternden Phantasiemenschen schließlich im Deutschen Adel hervor (Ferrari)",<sup>60</sup> this can apply only to Ferrari himself; the characterisation of the other main figures, as well as the narrator's comments recorded above, render such a view invalid as an interpretation of the novel as a whole. Deutscher Adel is not a thorough-going condemnation of the escape into fantasy; it is a fundamentally indecisive work in which Raabe as it were put off and tried to avoid the necessity of a final solution to the problem he was grappling with.

This indecisiveness - perhaps it might even be called timidity - is, I believe, a basic feature of Raabe's attitude to the imaginative outsider as we see it expressed in his mature works. Not only is it, as we have seen, a characteristic feature of both Wunnigel (1876) and Deutscher Adel (1877), but it also occurs in later works, notably Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895). In that work too, which is discussed in some detail though from a rather different point of view in Chapters II,1 and II,4 of this study, the reader cannot but be acutely aware of Raabe's essentially ambivalent approach. On the one hand we have Velten Andres who, despite his quite exceptional personal attributes, and the penetrating insights which these can on occasion produce,<sup>61</sup> is eventually brought to a state of utter ruin quite devastating as that of Wunnigel or Ferrari, because in one important aspect of his personal relationships - his feelings for Helene Trotzendorff - he lets the fruits of his imagination take over from reality so that in the end, when he is no longer able to avoid

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<sup>60</sup> B.A. 13/395.

<sup>61</sup> cf. pp.70-75 of this study, including Notes 66 and 71.



the truth concerning his situation and her attitude to him, he too seeks refuge - in an attempt to live emotionally isolated from other people - and when this fails, eventually returns to the scenes of his student days, seeking to recreate the past in boys' adventure stories and through the company of his aged former landlady, and finally dying in pathetic circumstances, the victim of his over-imaginative nature.<sup>62</sup>

In many ways the figure of Velten Andres is reminiscent of Wunnigel and Ferrari, and his significance could justly be seen, in some respects at least, as an extension of the function they fulfil in the earlier novels, that is to say, as an impassioned warning against the dangers which the harshness of real life represents for those whose imagination threatens to prove stronger than their continuing awareness and recognition of external reality.

62 Velten's character is discussed in some detail in Chapter II, 4. The link which seems to be implied here between creativity and instability is suggested not only in the characters of Velten, Ferrari and Wunnigel, but also in many other of Raabe's imaginative outsiders. A very striking parallel is to be found, for example, in the fate of the poet Felix Lippoldes (Pfisters Mühle, 1884), illustrated in this comment by Ebert Pfister: "Zu welchen Hoffnungen er in seinen jüngern, besseren Jahren im Kreise seiner Altersgenossen und als Dozent der klassischen Philologie an unserer Universitas litterarum berechtigt haben mochte: die schlimmsten Befürchtungen, die man in betreff eines zu gescheiten, zu nervösen und zu phantasiereichen Menschen haben kann, waren eingetroffen. Nun vegetierte er in unserm Dorfe in einer Bauernstube, die im Sommer auf den Landaufenthalt der unbemittelten Honoratioren der Stadt sich eingerichtet hatte, und seine Tochter war aus England, wohin sie als Gouvernante gegangen war, zurückgekommen, um ihm - leben zu helfen." (B.A. 16/83). In similar fashion - and in a way summing up Raabe's underlying concern with this phenomenon - the sculptor Querian (Frau Salome, 1874) is portrayed as a man of genius who is nevertheless unable to come to terms with the demands of everyday life. His friend Scholten seems to construe a general law regarding people of this type when he laments: "Da er der Begabteste von uns war, so fuhr die Welt natürlich am schlimmsten mit ihm." (B.A. 12/75). Something of this idea underlies the portrayal of practically all the imaginative outsiders we come across in Raabe's mature work.

On the other hand, however, in much the same way as in the two earlier novels, our impression of the imaginative outsider is modified by the existence, side by side with Velten, of a much less ambiguous representative of the imaginative approach to life: his mother. She is the only person who is both liked and respected by all the major characters, and alone of all the characters in the novel she understands both Velten and the more orthodox, socially respectable people such as Karl Krumhardt, his wife and his parents; in fact she is the only person who can claim any degree of insight at all into her son's impulses, emotions and values. Yet despite all this, Raabe seems to suggest that her personal stability, and with it her capacity to appreciate other people's character and attitudes is a direct product of her own imaginative meanderings, which banish fear and despondency by providing a hopeful and optimistic though necessarily temporary shelter from the recurrent buffetings of real life.<sup>63</sup> Despite her open and unashamed admission that she seeks refuge from time to time in her own fantasy-world, she is undoubtedly one of the most attractive and - from all points of view - positive

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63 This, at least, is Frau Andres' view of her own situation. Even before Velten's departure for America she confides to Krumhardt that without the possibility of a retreat into the world of make-believe, she would be unable to face the real world as cheerfully as she does: „.....der Geist Gottes schwebt zu allen Zeiten über den Wassern und bezeugt sein Recht auf jede Weise, auch die wunderlichste. Auch die Illusion gehört eben zu seinen Mitteln, die Erde grün zu machen und schön zu erhalten, und dein nährischer Schulgenosß läßt nicht von seinen Illusionen, lieber Karl. Er kann das Mädchen noch nicht aufgeben, und er sagt die Wahrheit, wenn er meint, daß auch sie noch immer nur auf ihn wartet und nach ihm um Hülfe aussieht. Möchte ich das ändern, wenn ich's könnte? Nein, nein! Ganz gewiß nicht! Auch ich halte ja, Gott sei Dank, meine Illusionen noch immer fest, wenn auch nicht mit seinem lachenden Herzen." (B.A. 19/30203)



characters of Raabe's mature fiction, and as such must be seen to represent at least a partial qualification to the chilling implications surrounding the characterisation of Velten. Here too, then, Raabe seems to be retreating from the brink and suggesting that, although with some people a surfeit of imagination may be a dangerous thing, and may make for dire and irreversible consequences, this need not necessarily be so; indeed, in the figure of Frau Andres, we have a very strong indication that he considers the escape into fantasy to be, under certain circumstances and with certain people, a positively helpful phenomenon. In Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895), as well as in Wunnigel (1876) and Deutscher Adel (1877), the problem of the imaginative outsider must therefore be regarded as ultimately unresolved.

In the light of the evidence from the novels we have looked at, how can we summarise the most important points concerning Raabe's attitude to the escape into fantasy? I think that above all three main points emerge.

Firstly, and most obviously, an examination of Raabe's treatment of the escape into fantasy dispels any suggestion that he is solely concerned with the faults and shortcomings of the community, of the social unit. Certainly he is deeply interested in that side of things, as I tried to demonstrate in the previous Chapter, but his interest goes beyond the merely social to encompass different, sometimes complementary, aspects of life. Of course it is virtually impossible to portray someone whose values and behaviour run counter to the generally accepted norm without at least implying some sort of comment on the function and influence of society itself, but, at least in Wunnigel and Deutscher Adel that is a secondary consideration.

(I think that in Die Akten des Vogelsangs the two aspects are accorded roughly the same degree of importance).<sup>64</sup> Raabe is, then, a writer who is acutely aware of different segments of reality, of different perspectives on life, and who takes account of these in his own creative work.

Secondly, Raabe's attitude to the imaginative outsider is essentially ambivalent. He sees clearly the dangers inherent in anything approaching a total surrender to the imagination, yet at the same time he also admires - and as a creative writer himself must share - the insight and sensitivity of the highly imaginative individual. In the novels we looked at, this ambivalent attitude finds expression in an apparent desire to achieve some sort of compromise - synthesis is, I think, too positive a concept for what is involved here - between the claims of external reality and the temptations of the imagination. To this extent it is arguable that in thus portraying the escape into fantasy he is in a way indulging in it himself. In this regard there is, however, evidence of a change of attitude between Wunnigel and Deutscher Adel, and certain later novels: in the earlier novels Raabe endows the moderate, more readily acceptable representatives of the imaginative perspective with a status more or less equal to that of their more extreme (and admittedly more intriguing) counterparts, and implies in so doing that the possibility of full self-realisation through the achievement of a balance between empirical reality and the imagination is at least as likely as that of failure and ruin through a solipsistic

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64 This feature of Raabe's writing is dealt with in particular on pp.46-48 and 51-52 of this study, including Note 40.



denial of the claims of the outside world - Brüggemann carries as much weight as Wunnigel, and the figure of Ferrari in no way lessens the significance of Achtermann or the Schencks. In Die Akten des Vogelsangs, however, the balance of forces has shifted decisively away from the hesitancy and ambiguity of the earlier novels; although the characterisation of Frau Andres certainly carries a degree of authority and conviction, this is entirely insufficient to establish her as a serious counterweight to the attraction of and significance attaching to Velten. The figure of Frau Andres suggests only a possibility, not a full-blooded viable alternative. Although certain doubts and qualifications remain, it seems clear that in Die Akten des Vogelsangs Raabe has progressed a long way towards coming to terms boldly and honestly with the implications suggested so hesitantly and reluctantly in Wunnigel and Deutscher Adel. Here at last the insecurity and vulnerability of the imaginative outsider are presented in all their stark reality, with no more than a hint that they can be overcome successfully without blunting beyond measure the very sensitivity and insight which give rise to them in the first place.

Thirdly, and arising to some extent out of the second conclusion, it seems to me that when we weigh the evidence of this Chapter against that of the previous one we find that, both with respect to the over-all structure of his novels and to their internal plots and characterisation, Raabe exhibits a distrust of extremes and a desire for moderation. In the first case we see how, in all three novels we have just examined, he balances and to some extent weakens the force of his central character by the creation of a counterweight whose influence and credibility make the attitudes and behaviour the

author is depicting seem less eccentric and therefore more acceptable. In the same way, both through Leonhard Hagebucher's ultimate reconciliation with society and by virtue of Karl Krumhardt's own honest admissions, Raabe successfully steers the direction of Abu Telfan and Die Akten des Vogelsangs away from outright condemnation of conventional social values towards a less sweeping though still essentially negative position. As far as the internal action of the novels is concerned, the same desire for moderation applies: it is the extreme characters, whatever form their extremism may take, who fall, and their more moderate though often less gifted counterparts who find themselves able to live a fairly happy and balanced life. This aspect too is discussed at greater length at a later stage;<sup>65</sup> for the time being, however, I should like to move on to an examination of a topic which has until now been mentioned only in passing, but which, both on its own account and by virtue of its close relationship with what has gone before, plays an important part in Raabe's mature works: the significance of the past and its effect upon the individual in the present.

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65 See Chapter II,4: "Escape into extremism"



### Chapter 3 - Escape into memory

In the preceeding two Chapters I have tried to give an account of Raabe's treatment of two different aspects of what I have termed the "escape from reality". In the first instance, the "escape into conformity", I examined his portrayal of an attempt to find a corporate solution to an essentially individual problem; in the second instance, the "escape into fantasy", we were faced with a solipsistic response (if that is the right word in this context) to a social challenge. I should like now to turn to quite a different phenomenon, one which, to be sure, encompasses elements from the two foregoing attitudes, but which, by virtue of at least one totally distinctive feature, merits separate consideration. What we are concerned with in this Chapter is Raabe's approach to the passing of time and - more specifically - the response to it presented through some of the characters from his later novels.

This theme has attracted more attention than<sup>n</sup> almost any other single issue - with the possible exception of Raabe's social preoccupations - and his treatment of it has met with extremely diverse reactions. On the one hand we do not have to look far to come across negative and disparaging comments; for some critics, Raabe's relationship to the past, and especially to the years of childhood and adolescence, is characterised by wistful sentimentality betraying a timorous, not to say dishonest attitude to the problems of the present. Thus Roy Pascal, while recognising that Raabe does on occasion cast a more discerning glance at the past, feels that he often succumbs to a regrettable tendency to "run away from the

complexity of the present and to idealise childhood";<sup>1</sup> Georg Lukacs, dealing with what he sees as Raabe's sentimentalisation of childhood, castigates „die Flucht ins seelische, ‚Intermundium‘, die Rettung des Menschen in die realisierte Welt der Kindheitsträume";<sup>2</sup> and H. R. Klieneberger accuses him of harbouring a nostalgia for the past and a fear of the future.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand several eminent scholars, notably Karl Hoppe, Barker Fairley, Erich Weniger and Fritz Martini, have taken up a radically different standpoint, arguing that the temper and actions of Raabe's figures should not be regarded as reflections of his own position on any given matter and that although the atmosphere of a particular book might seem sentimental and the concentration of the reader seem to be directed towards the past rather than the present, this merely indicates how some or all of the characters react to their situation, and is not necessarily evidence as to the author's own convictions. This argument is, of course, strongest when applied to a first-person narrative, and it is no coincidence that most of the works at the centre of the controversy - for example Meister Autor (1873), Alte Nester (1879), Stopfkuchen (1889) and Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) fall into this category.

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1 See Pascal: "The reminiscence-technique in Raabe", p.346 and The German Novel, p.171. Pascal does, however, agree that Raabe does not usually romanticise the past (The German Novel, p.144), adding that the profundity of his work lies in the fact that it offers a critique both of present and past (op.cit., p.152).

2 Georg Lukacs, op.cit., 246. A similar view is taken by Georg Ullmann (op.cit., pp.108, 110, 154).

3 Klieneberger, op.cit., pp.96-97.



How are we, then, in the light of two so clearly incompatible but, for the most part, self-consistent points of view, to pass a fair judgment on Raabe's attitude to the past? This problem, and the question as to whether or not his attitude is idealised are obviously of considerable importance in a general study of Raabe's presentation of reality and illusion and I hope in the course of this Chapter to suggest the general principles underlying his basic attitude and to illustrate these through particular but representative examples. In this connection two fundamental questions must be tackled at the outset. Firstly, does Raabe present us with characters who, for one reason or another, take refuge in the past or attempt to do so? And secondly, if this is the case, are these characters portrayed in a predominantly positive or negative light? In other words, how does their relationship to the past affect their situation in the present and their perception of the world around them?

The answer to the first question is immediately apparent and need not occupy us unduly. From the very beginnings of Raabe's creative activity, with Die Chronik der Sperlingsgasse (1855), right down to the unfinished Altershausen (1902) of forty-seven years later we continually meet characters who deem it desirable, sometimes even necessary, to seek out, at least in the imagination, the people and places they knew in their youth. Between the narrators of his first and last works, Johannes Wacholder (who begins plaintively: „..... weder meine Folianten noch meine anderen mühsam aufgestapelten gelehrten Schätze vermögen es, die aufsteigenden Kobolde und Quälgeister des Greisenalters zu verscheuchen. Sie zu bannen schreibe ich die folgenden Blätter,...“ - B.A. 1/14-15) and Fritz Feyerabend (who has to admit the truth of Minchen Ahrens' comment

that he has revisited Altershausen „weil du ... Heimweh gehabt hast nach ... dem Besten aus deinen besten Jahren" - B.A. 20/281), we come across a large number of characters, often, as I suggested above, in the figure of a first-person narrator, who, because they feel threatened by the present, or out of place in the midst of new developments which they do not understand, or again because they feel that the life they are leading is not sufficiently satisfying, seek refuge in the warm companionship of what they seem to remember as the happy, fulfilling days of youth. It would be easy to compile a formidable list of such characters;<sup>4</sup> suffice it to say for the moment, however, that their existence is undeniable and that we can, therefore, legitimately proceed to our second question: in what way, if any, is the perception of such people affected by their relationship to the past?<sup>5</sup>

I believe that this question is best approached by a close

4 Such a list would have to include at least Friedrich Martin Kindler (Das letzte Recht, 1862), Hermann (the narrator of Holunderblüte, 1863), Base Schlotterbeck (Der Hungerpastor, 1863), Fräulein von St. Trouin (Der Schütterump, 1869), Fritz Langreuter and Ewald Sixtus (Alte Nester, 1879), Frau Andres (Die Akten des Vogelsangs, 1895) and Fritz Feyerabend (Altershausen, 1902).

5 Since the virtual completion of this study I have had access to Gerald Opie's examination of the theme of childhood in Raabe (quoted above), which represents in essence a historical survey of developments in Raabe's literary portrayal of childhood and its values. While Opie's claim (op. cit., p.3) that "the attempt to come to terms with childhood and the heritage of the past may be seen as the main-spring of Raabe's whole work" seems to me rather to overstate the case, there is no doubt that, by virtue of the patterns and developments it illustrates in a hitherto neglected area, his study makes a useful contribution to contemporary Raabe-criticism. The importance of reminiscence and childhood, not only as far as Raabe is concerned, but in terms of the mid-19th century narrative as a whole, is emphasised also by Prof. J. M. Ritchie in his article: "The Ambivalence of 'Realism' in German Literature 1830-1880." (Orbis Litterarum 15, 3-4, 1960, pp.200-217).



examination of some of Raabe's later novels, of which the two most representative, as far as his attitude to the past is concerned, are probably Alte Nester (completed in 1879) and Altershausen (abandoned as an unpublished fragment in 1902), for not only do they stand at the beginning and the end of what is now generally accepted as the most fruitful phase of his creative activity, but of all the works of that period they are the ones where the primary focus of interest is most clearly associated with the past and with differing reactions to it.<sup>6</sup> That is not to say that interest in the past is confined to these two novels - clearly, as I have indicated, it is not - or that the two novels in question are concerned only with the past and its effect on the individual; that too is by no means the case.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, most of Raabe's late novels are dense, highly integrated pieces of work with regard both to theme and to form, so that for the purposes of this study I have attempted not to give a complete interpretation of each novel I have looked at, but in each case to

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6 One of the few points on which Raabe-critics of several generations are more or less united is that the character of his work undergoes a gradual but perceptible change in the middle and later 1870s. Not all are agreed as to the relative merits of works written before and after this time, but most postwar assessments (taking their lead from Romano Guardini and Barker Fairley) place the works written between c.1875 and the abandonment of Altershausen (1902) on a generally higher level than those of earlier periods. Several critics attempt the rather speculative task of specifying precisely which work constitutes the beginning of the new period and although there is some disagreement on this, almost all take the view that the change can be said to have evolved some time between the composition of Horacker (1875) and Alte Nester (1879). A helpful survey of this aspect of Raabe-criticism is provided by Peter Detroy (Wilhelm Raabe. Der Humour als Gestaltungsprinzip in „Stopfkuchen“ Bonn, 1970, p.2, Note 12).

7 To take only one example, Altershausen, as well as dealing with questions of the individual's relationship to past and present, is the vehicle for a great deal of indirect but very penetrating contemporary social criticism. (See pp.174-76 of this study, and Note 38).

analyse one factor of overriding importance in order to illustrate Raabe's treatment of the individual themes under discussion, while also indicating from time to time the essential connections which hold his novels together and produce the tightly woven fabric so characteristic of them. From this point of view, Alte Nester and Altershausen offer the most fruitful opportunities for a discussion of Raabe's treatment of the "escape into memory."

(1) Alte Nester (1879)

Although at least half a dozen characters play a more or less prominent role in Alte Nester, our interest is concentrated for the most part on the three central figures, Just Everstein, Ewald Sixtus and Fritz Lengreuter. It is their relationship to the past and present which constitutes the most important aspect of the novel and represents Raabe's main sphere of interest at the time of its composition. In this respect, a contrast has often been established between the personality and actions of Just and Ewald, and appropriate conclusions as to Raabe's intentions have been drawn.<sup>8</sup> Such a procedure is certainly worthwhile to some degree, for the contrasts it establishes are undeniable and the conclusions to which it leads are valid, so far as they go. I believe, however, that a rather different approach is to be preferred in a specific study of

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8 Not all who establish such a contrast agree as to its precise implications, but it is certainly a popular method of approach to Alte Nester. Among those who have adopted it are Fritz Martini ("Wilhelm Raabe" in Epochen der deutschen Literatur, Bd. V/2 "Bürgerlicher Realismus", Stuttgart, 1962, pp.665-736; see especially p.723), Hermann Pongs (op.cit., pp.447, 456, 460), Wolfgang Reuter (op.cit., p.109) and Georg Ullmann (op.cit., pp.158-59).



the escape into memory as Raabe depicts it in Alte Nester, since the method I have just outlined, while making valid comparisons between two differing ways of life, tends to concentrate on single contrasts between individuals (in this case Just Everstein and Ewald Sixtus) to the detriment of a more broadly based examination of the implications involved. For this reason I shall leave Just and Ewald out of account for the present, except by way of occasional contrast or comparison, and concentrate rather on the significance of the third central figure, Fritz Langreuter, who, by virtue both of the type of person he is and of his crucial position as narrator, exemplifies in a particularly intense manner the most important aspects of Raabe's attitude to the past as it emerges in Alte Nester.

Each of the three central figures incorporates at least one feature essential to the novel as a whole: Just, as well as presenting us with an alternative set of priorities to that of the others, occupies an indispensable position as the puller of strings in the later stages of the novel, and as honest broker in the at one point seemingly irresoluble dealings between Ewald and Irene Everstein; Ewald himself is a necessary agent in bringing about Langreuter's return to the scenes of his youth, without which the later events and the dénouement could never have been recorded (at least, not without introducing an unacceptable level of coincidence such as the stratagem to which Raabe had recourse in Drei Federn, 1865);<sup>9</sup> and Langreuter, to whom we now turn, not only illustrates, by way of unconscious personal example, the major theme of the novel, but also

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9 See Chapter II, 4 of this study.

plays a crucial role as narrator, selecting which events and impressions he wishes to include, and imposing his own personality on the spirit of his record. His importance is both formal and thematic.<sup>10</sup>

In one sense almost everything that Langreuter says relates to the past: the entire narrated time of the novel belongs to the past,

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<sup>10</sup> Raabe seems to have become more and more attracted with the passing of the years to the method of using a fully personalised narrator. Between the completion of Drei Federn (1865) and Alte Nester (1879), he produced six first-person narratives (Die Gänse von Bützow 1865, Deutscher Mondschein 1872, Meister Autor 1873, Theklas Erbschaft 1865, Im Siegeskranze 1866, and Des Reiches Krone 1870) of which only the first three have narrators who can be considered viable characters in their own right. On the other hand, all of the first-person narratives written after Alte Nester (Pfisters Mühle 1884, Stopfkuchen 1889, Die Akten des Vogelsangs 1895 and Altershausen 1902) have at their centre a narrator whose significance is at least as great as that of any other character, and without whom the novel in question would be quite unthinkable. Langreuter himself is far from being merely a shadowy and depersonalised narrator whose only function is to set a plot into some sort of context and lend it a further degree of credibility; we learn about his emotions, values and general character not only from the role he plays in the narrative as such, and from his reflections upon the events and relationships he describes, but also from the distinctive style he adopts. In particular we become more and more aware of a finely weighted approach to language and form. Despite his denial of any formal pretensions ("Ich, der ich hier keinen Roman schreibe...." B.A. 14/146), it is clear that he is a conscious stylist: the parenthesis with which he qualifies his use of the verb "berühren" in an emotional context - "(ich darf diese kitzelnd zugespitzte moderne Redensart an dieser Stelle wohl anwenden)" B.A. 13/54 - is only one of several indications of a detached and deliberate approach to the formal aspects of his narrative. Closely linked to this almost pedantic concern with formal detail, and also evident from the style of Langreuter's record is his attachment to the academic culture he has made his own: literary and artistic allusions, particularly to Goethe, Shakespeare, Homer and Rembrandt, abound, adding to our overall appreciation of the personal characteristics of the narrator. Indeed, it seems to me that Raabe's primary interest lies not with the exemplary figure of Just, whose role in respect of the final events seems little more than that of a technically essential but personally unconvincing deus ex machina, but with the imperfect and confused but essentially human personality and attitudes of Langreuter, whose development and (sometimes involuntary) self-characterisation contribute a great deal to the character and flavour of the novel as a whole.



a large segment of it at a remove of more than a whole generation from the period in which he is writing (a fact on which he bases a rather unconvincing claim to objectivity);<sup>11</sup> his present situation seldom intrudes into our consciousness, and when it does, the only function it serves is to heighten our awareness of the difference in atmosphere between present and past. The past is, therefore, both the chief focus of our attention and the overriding interest of the narrator.

As far as Langreuter's perception of the past is concerned, three separate periods can be distinguished: firstly, the years of childhood and adolescence between his arrival at Schloß Werden and the bankruptcies of Herr von Everstein and Just, with the subsequent loss of contact among the previously closely-knit circle of friends; secondly, the years covering Langreuter's university education and academic activity up to the return of Just and Ewald; and thirdly, the period between Ewald's return and the dénouement, following the death of Ewald's father. In the meantime, however, when talking of "the past", I shall normally be referring to the first period, for there is an important qualitative difference as far as Langreuter is concerned between it and the two later periods. Despite the blurred presentation of its conclusion, it is for Langreuter a time which has

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11 cf. B.A. 14/10 „....es ist viel mehr als ein Menschenalter seit dem Tage hingegangen, und ich kann dreist die objektivsten Bemerkungen an ihn anknüpfen.“

come to a definite end.<sup>12</sup> In a purely temporal sense, he feels himself to be at a remove from it; a simple illustration of this point can be had in the repeated insistence on temporal distance through the use of phrases such as „damals" and „zu jener Zeit", and through the image of „ausgeflogene Nester". In addition it forms a contrast in almost every respect to the tenor of his present life and the situation in which he is writing. This feeling of distance and contrast is not nearly so obvious - if indeed it is present at all - when we compare Langreuter's attitude to the present with his relationship to the second and third periods of the past; for one reason or another he seems to regard these periods as being closer in spirit to his present situation than to the years of his boyhood and adolescence.<sup>13</sup> In order to analyse his attitude to the past fully and adequately we must, therefore, concentrate our attention on his relationships to the first period, the period of his youth, and on his present view of it.

Generally speaking, Langreuter's view of the past is almost entirely positive. He recalls it principally as a time of pranks undertaken on a moment's impulse, of unquestioning youthful happiness,

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12 It is evident that the actual events following on the catastrophe and surrounding the break-up of the group are presented in a noticeably fragmentary fashion, as if Langreuter wanted to blur them as much as possible; the significance of this is discussed on pp.160-163 of this study.

13 Why this should be is not immediately obvious, but a contributory factor may be the simple fact that only the first period is marked off from the rest by a particularly traumatic event affecting the lives and relationships of all those involved in a radical manner and for an extended period. Thus the sense of qualitative change is confined in the main to the contrast between the first period and all the others.



above all of a cheerful unawareness either of the inexorable passage of time or of the hidden but approaching dangers threatening them all.<sup>14</sup> Even if he did not say so explicitly, this would be clear from the recurrent images he uses:<sup>15</sup> he has only to mention the walnut bushes in the gardens of Schloß Werden or the hawthorn and hornbeam hedges round about, to transport himself, and latterly the reader, into a far-off world only vaguely conceived, yet whose general features are immediately formed and accepted. The images applied to this world of youth are such that texture, colour and sensation combine to evoke a whole whose harmony is as complete as its reality is questionable. The texture of the images - the bushes and hedges themselves - is complemented by repeated references to their colour - normally green, gold or golden-green - from which the reader infers an atmosphere of peaceful contentment broken up only by intervals of a more exuberant satisfaction. Generally speaking, Langreuter seems to

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14 The extent of their blissful ignorance is all too clear to the adult Langreuter who, indicating the nature of his later life in Berlin, recalls not only the traumatic effect of the break-up of the group but also the unreflecting innocence of their youthful years: „Wo waren die anderen im Strom der Zeit geblieben? Was war aus den anderen geworden, die vor ein paar Seiten noch mit mir jung, gesund, dumm und glücklich waren?" (B.A. 14/83, my emphasis; the phrase „vor ein paar Seiten" also serves to underline what we saw earlier concerning Langreuter's conscious and deliberate approach to the formal aspects of the narrative - see p. 148, Note 10).

15 On occasion Langreuter does make an explicit statement expressing such a view of the years of his youth. One of the most obvious occurs roughly half-way through the narrative when, recalling the painful days surrounding the death of Irene's child (an event which falls into the third period), he thinks back with wistful and somewhat bitter longing to the seemingly halcyon years at Schloß Werden: „O über die goldengrünen Zweige, in denen wir uns wiegten, unsere Nester bauten und von der Welt träumten und auch als Kinder, nicht als ausgewachsene Leute und große Philosophen, die Welt für ein Spiel nahmen, in welchem wir mitspielen durften! ..." (B.A. 14/129)

associate the colour green with quiet contentment and a feeling of protected well-being. This impression arises mainly from the many references to the colour of the hedges and woods around Schloß Werden, which represent the milieu of most of their youthful experiences and which give shade not only from the physical heat of the sun but also from the lurking realities of adult life. When the colour gold too is evoked, it suggests a natural overlay of light and sparkle, and an endless succession of perfect summer days. A similar impression is often gained by the use Langreuter makes of blue.<sup>16</sup> These colours suggest so much to Langreuter in the way of remembered childhood experience that the mere successive enumeration of them suffices to trigger off in him a whole series of associations and to transport him in spirit back to the days of his youth. Thus he has no need to recall or recount numerous separate events; a simple phrase such as „meine in Blau, Silber, Grün, Gold und Purpur schimmernden Märchenjahre" or a reference to „unserer Kinderzeit, als unsere Nester noch im Grün, im Sonnenschein und Himmelsblau hingen"<sup>17</sup> suggests the flavour of his recollections more effectively than a more detailed, "factual" account could have done. To this is added the sun, which not only lends light and colour to the natural surroundings, but also radiates warmth which is felt and enjoyed by Langreuter and his friends during their times of leisure. (The first and possibly most obvious example of this is seen in the description of the sun and its effect during the first of the two

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16 It should be noted, however, that the connotations attaching to blue and gold change fundamentally when Langreuter concentrates his attention on the "present", whereas the reaction evoked by green remains entirely positive.

17 B.A. 14/20, 245.



visits made by Langreuter and his friends to the Steinhof).<sup>18</sup> The repetition of different combinations of these motifs, with their connotations of tranquillity, happiness and warmth builds up within the reader's imagination an overwhelming sense of well-being and security, so that eventually his picture of the people and events portrayed becomes as alluring and positive as Langreuter evidently imagines it was, and all without any need for the narrator to go into detail to substantiate his suggestions. It is true that early on in the narrative Langreuter insists that the life they had led as children was in no sense romantic or idyllic, but the very elements of realism which he mentions - the wearing of patched clothes in the interests of economy and the strong natural smells of farm and forest - belong to the corpus of romanticised or at least appealing notions entertained by the townsman about life in the country; they are hardly likely to make the objects of Langreuter's narrative seem any less attractive.<sup>19</sup> In any case this démenti, coming as it does

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18 See especially B.A. 14/60-61. When his thoughts are focussed on the "present", Langreuter seems to acquire a strong dislike of the sun, for reasons which I shall go into at a later stage (see pp. 164-66 of this study); with regard to the "past", however, its associations are almost entirely positive.

19 cf. B.A. 14/23: "Ich ergreife hier mit beiden Händen die Gelegenheit, zu versichern, daß hier nichts, gar nichts allzu reinlich, zierlich und frisch lackiert aus dem Putz- und Schmuckkästchen der Romantik entnommen ist" and B.A. 14/24: "....wir waren allesamt und auf Meilen in die Runde ein s o h m u d d e l i g e s Volk. ... Wir waren ein ganz unromantisches Völklein;..." That Langreuter, at least during the second and third periods of the narrative, and during the time of composition, sees himself - and should be seen by the reader - as essentially a townsman is clear from the following self-characterisation: "Um es mit ein paar kurzen Worten auszudrücken: mein Name war Dr. Langreuter, der irische Baukünstler Ewald Sixtus hatte mich nur für einige Wochen aus einem mir völlig angemessenen Lebensberuf weggeholt, und ich gehörte einfach nach Berlin und nicht nach Dorf Werden;...." (B.A. 14/233)

so near the beginning of the novel (it is contained in the fourth Chapter of Book One) is soon forgotten once the reader is caught up in the powerful flow of images mentioned above; indeed this very process is initiated at a later stage in the same Chapter where Langreuter, recalling a question he had been asked as a boy by Graf von Everstein, continues:

....bei dieser Frage öffnet es sich vor mir breit, weit, sonnig, grün, Berghügel und Berghügel, Tal und Tal, und dann einmal zwischen zwei Bergen das Glitzern einer Flußwindung, und dann auf der Ferne rundum ein blauer, lichter, magischer Dunstschleier, den man - wie Ewald behauptet - sich am besten zwischen seinen ausgespreizten Beinen durch blickt: da ist Eva Sixtus und ihr Bruder Ewald und Irene Everstein und - ich auch Friedrich Langreuter, der Weltweisheit Beflissener! Den unsterblichen Göttern sei Dank, daß dem so war, daß wir einmal s o da waren!" (B.A. 14/27)

This passage, including as it does allusions to all the major motifs of the novel, sets in large measure the tone of the subsequent narrative. There can be no doubt that, despite Langreuter's rather feeble assertion of the contrary, the picture he paints of his youthful years is, if not deliberately idealised, at least, whether or not he was conscious of it, highly selective. Between the time of his arrival at Schloß Werden after the murder of his father, and the break-up of the circle of friends following Just's financial downfall - both events seemingly grossly at odds with the tenor of the period which they introduce and conclude - hardly a single discordant note spoils the harmony of the remembered past. The reigning mood is one of boyish exuberance alternating with placid, unquestioning contentment.

Taken on its own terms, Langreuter's narrative, and its evocation of a period of seemingly timeless, unadulterated happiness is, to be sure, attractive, even alluring. In a sense, the reader



may even feel a desire to identify to some degree with Langreuter and to emulate in personal terms his own sentimental return to the paradise of childhood memories. But at the same time he will probably be held back by a nagging sense of doubt, by the sad recognition that such a blissful existence is only possible in the highly selective context of wishful reminiscence and can never be found in the real world, not even the world of genuine childhood experience. He will suspect that, for whatever reason, Langreuter has recorded only those aspects of his childhood relationship which suit his present purpose, and that the true essence of his boyhood was by no means as idyllic as he now makes it appear to have been; and in fact this suspicion is given further weight, if not indeed absolutely confirmed, by what we know of Langreuter's personality in the "present". On his own admission, he feels dissatisfied with his position in life: his academic activity seems to him worthless, sometimes even a sham;<sup>20</sup> in addition he is taciturn to the point of being anti-social, and does not seem capable of forming deep and lasting relationships (for he evidently has no significant personal ties after his first departure from Werden and the death, several

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20 At one point, for example, Langreuter admits: "....der Vetter Just hatte vollkommen recht: es war erbärmlich wenig, was ich von der Welt durch m e i n Quellenstudium in Erfahrung gebracht und d a r i n b e h a l t e n hatte." (B.A. 14/90, italics in original), and later he refers to "der vielbeschäftigten, selbstgenügsamen Indolenz, die plötzlich zu dem Bewußtsein kommt, wie wenig auf Erden durch sie zum Guten, Wirklichen und Wahren ausgerichtet wird!" (B.A. 14/92) and continues: "Mittelalterliches Quellenstudium hatte ich zur Genüge für mich und andere getrieben, ... aber die Quellen des lebendigen Daseins, die neben mir aus dem Boden aufsprudelten, jede nach ihrer Art trübe oder klar, mit ihren Kristallblasen und Überhängendem Grün, mit ihrem Treiben von Kindermühlenwerken und Fabrikrädern, mit ihrem Rauschen über Stock und Stein, die waren mir nur zu sehr aus dem Gesicht und Gehör ferngeblieben!" (B.A. 14/92)

years later, of his mother). In the light of this it seems unlikely that someone whose adult life is so unfulfilling could have enjoyed a childhood and youth of such undiluted happiness up to his twentieth year,<sup>21</sup> and it seems to me that this consideration must give conclusive force to the at first rather unwelcome feeling that what Langreuter is presenting us with is not an objective, disinterested record of his years at Werden, but an intricate web of authenticity, exaggeration and omission whose particular origins have to be sought in the narrator's present situation and attitudes.

If this is, in fact, the case, then the importance of Langreuter's narrative lies not so much in what it tells us about his boyhood experiences (for, as we have seen, it is highly misleading in that respect), but in what it reveals to us about the sort of person he is now; his record of the past is, to put it another way, a very enlightening indication of his attitude to the present. In this context the question of why Langreuter offers us such an erratic picture of the past assumes an obvious significance, and part of the answer at least is suggested by those factors of personality I hinted at a moment ago.

We have seen that Langreuter is essentially an introspective, indeed rather timid and fearful individual, who finds it virtually impossible to establish profound and durable personal relationships.

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21 The only unpleasant emotion which Langreuter admits to having experienced during that time is occasional apprehension when confronted with physical danger (cf. his initial fear of tree-climbing, expressed on B.A. 14/32) or the prospect of parental punishment. In this respect (even down to his situation on the ground looking up at the others in the tree!) he is very reminiscent of Karl Krumhardt (Die Akten des Vogelsangs 1895) - cf. Chapter II, 1 of this study, especially pp. 53-56.



He lives a lonely life of dissatisfaction and self-reproach, a life unsweetened by fulfilment either in his academic work or in any leisure-time activities.<sup>22</sup> Is it not natural, perhaps even desirable, that such a man in such circumstances should erect round about him an image of a warm, colourful, idyllic past as a refuge, a means of escape from the bleak, chilling emptiness of the present? For this is the function, in personal and psychological terms, of Langreuter's selective reminiscences: they afford him a few fleeting moments of transitory, perhaps it is not too much to say counterfeit happiness in the midst of what seems to him to be the all-pervading gloom and hopelessness of the present.<sup>23</sup> A peculiarly striking illustration of his attitude in this respect occurs in the fourth Chapter of Book One, where he recalls the great debt of gratitude which he feels he owes to an ancient biography of Pope Sixtus V which had formerly belonged to Ewald's father and which has since passed into his own possession. The contents of the book arouse only a passing interest; what is important for Langreuter are the memories it evokes, together with their persuasive powers of consolation;

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22 Langreuter's habit of self-reproach is suggested as early as the third Chapter of Book One, where he mentions „den gottlob kaum erwähnenswerten Ansatz von Buckel, den mir das Schicksal zwischen die Schultern und, wie einige wissen wollen, in bedeutend höherem Grade auch auf die Seele gelegt hat,...." (B.A. 14/19) Similarly, at a much later stage he is only too willing to number himself among those, „welche nach einem Menschenalter alt, enttäuscht, krank und v e r d r o s s e n sein werden!" (B.A. 14/147)

23 That Langreuter sees the warmth and colour of the past as an antidote to the grey drabness of the present is apparent almost from the beginning of the narrative, as this typical extract suggests: „Der trübe Tag vermag nichts dagegen; die Namen, die hier zum erstenmal auftauchen, liegen doch im ewigen Sonnenschein,...." (B.A. 14/22)

Ich brauche es nur wie ein richtiges Zauberbuch aufzuschlagen, um über seine vergilbten Blätter hinweg alles vor mir lebendig zu haben, was damals mein Leben nicht bloß bedeutete, sondern war. Treffe ich auf eine Daumenspur des Alten am Rande der Blattseite, so ist es noch besser und gibt die wärmere Farbe. Freilich eine wärmere Farbe! (B.A. 14/23)

The warm glow of childhood which the old book radiates serves as a temporary insulation against the cold depressing awareness of personal and social inadequacy. Nor is this escape into the past something to which he has recourse only occasionally, as a means of self-protection in the wake of a particularly traumatic incident or set of circumstances; rather it develops over the years into a lasting and ever more powerful addiction, so that towards the end of Book One, Langreuter, from his standpoint as narrator (that is to say, conveying his "present" point of view on the matter) feels not only vindicated in presenting the practice of childhood reminiscence as an aid to mental self-preservation, but virtually constrained to do so:

Wehe dem, der niemals die grauen vier Wände um sich her mit diesem flimmernden, über die Stunde wegtäuschenden, segensreichen Lichtglanz überkleiden konnte!

Was ist die nichtige dumme Phrase: mein Haus ist meine Burg! gegen die so sehr unpolitische, so selten ausgesprochene und doch so tief und fest, ja manchmal mit der Angst der Verzweiflung im Herzen festgehaltene Überzeugung:

Mein Luftschloß ist mein Haus! (B.A. 14/148)

Such a confident or, one might say, over-confident expression of faith in the healing and stabilising power of the escape into memory (for Langreuter is attempting at this point to justify his practice of reading and re-reading children's books) is obviously not made lightly; for what he might well have described as valid reasons of common humanity, Langreuter is willing to set out in clear and unambiguous terms his belief in the efficacy of childhood



reminiscence as a balancing, indeed a saving factor in the wearying struggle of everyday existence. In terms of his own appreciation of them, the psychological origins of this behaviour are, then, clear and explicit for him. To this extent he is in control: he recognises the element of escape involved and justifies it to himself and to others in terms of personal and human necessity. (Seen in this light, his decision to specialise academically in medieval historical sources takes on a further significance). What he is obviously not aware of and cannot, therefore, control or even check, is the undeniably negative cumulative effect which such a practice inevitably exerts on his appreciation of his own situation, and of his relationship to and image of the childhood acquaintances whose former reality provides the basis for his imaginative excursions into the apparently remembered past. For the truth of the matter is that Langreuter's escape into memory leads to a twofold distortion of his perception: in the first place, the idealisation of his childhood and the process of positive selectivity underlying its portrayal inevitably combine to present an unbalanced and misleading picture of the past. The events and situations are recorded not as they actually were or appeared to be at the time, but as Langreuter would like to imagine them a generation later. As we have seen, this selectivity is in large measure a product of his own psychological needs; it affords him a degree of comfort and consolation and allows him to fend off for a time the full awareness of his personal inadequacy. This in itself seems no doubt fairly innocuous, and if that were all there is to it, there would be little indeed in the character of Langreuter to interest the critic, the reader or even the author himself. It is, after all by no means uncommon for

perfectly responsible, even (or especially?) otherwise hard and ruthless individuals to indulge from time to time in sentimental childhood reminiscence. What distinguishes Langreuter's attitude to the past from a mere occasional harmless indulgence is, however, the second layer of distortion which it occasions in his case: an almost irretrievably inaccurate perception of the present. The point is that Langreuter's attitude to the present is conditioned, even predetermined, by his view of the past; it is almost as if he regarded the past as in some ways more real and more immediate than the present, and in this respect it is noteworthy that he uses the present tense throughout when recording events connected with the period covered by his boyhood years in Werden (the "past" in the sense defined on pages 149 and 150 of this study), reverting to the past tense at the very end of that period, immediately before describing how the news of the two bankruptcies reached the Steinhof. This indication, all the more significant as the change is a conscious one, suggests that Langreuter feels in some way more at home in the relatively distant past than in either of the other two periods of his narrative or, indeed, the present. More than this: it seems to him in a sense more genuine and more authentic than events and situations which occupy a much closer temporal



position.<sup>24</sup> The result of this virtual transposition of time-levels within Langreuter's consciousness is far-reaching and almost irreversible: because the past means so much and seems so immediate and authentic, he finds it all too easy to assume that those who people his image of the past - his childhood companions, now scattered here and there throughout the world - remain essentially the same as they had been a generation previously and that their attitudes and relationships too have remained inviolate, unaffected by the passing of time and of changing circumstances. He takes virtually no account of the probable, indeed inevitable effect of change on people and environment<sup>25</sup> so that, with the passing of the

24 That Langreuter is well aware of the change of tense and has, indeed, effected it deliberately, is clear from his statement at that point in the narrative: „Ich habe bis jetzt meistens im Präsens geschrieben: in den Zeitformen der Vergangenheit fahre ich von j e t z t a n f o r t zu schreiben! (B.A. 14/76). His feeling of a closer association with the past than with the present is also indicated by periodic references on his part to „unsere Zeit“ (e.g. B.A. 14/170, 215, 220) when speaking of the first period covered by the narrative, and by unconsciously significant statements such as the following: „Eine neue Chaussee führt über die Stelle weg, wo m e i n e Nußbäume standen,...“ (B.A. 14/36, italics in original) This feeling of nearness in spirit to the past obviously forms a significant contrast to the awareness of temporal distance mentioned on page 150 of this study.

25 On one or two occasions Langreuter does make mention of the existence and effect of transience („Was bleibt auch mir anderes übrig, als mir heute aus den Zuständen der Vergangenheit eine angenehme Gegenwartsunterhaltung künstlerisch-chemisch abzuziehen und das Caput mortuum in den frischesten Wind zu streuen, der augenblicklich vor dem Fenster weht?“ (B.A. 14/53); „....aus Kindern werden Leute. Die Zeit steht nicht still - weder in dem grünen Walde noch im entblätterten, weder über der Weizensaat noch über dem Stoppelfelde, nicht auf dem Flusse noch diesseits und jenseits desselben, weder in Bodenwerder noch auf dem Steinhofe und auf Schloß Werden.“ (B.A. 14/70)), but such admissions, in any case very few and far between, all occur in the narrative time (i.e. the "present") and do not, therefore impinge on the consciousness of Langreuter as a character. He accepts the existence and effect of transience on the intellectual level, in the abstract, but refuses to do so on the much more significant emotional level.

years, his picture of his friends becomes more and more fallacious, by virtue certainly of his idealising tendencies, but primarily in consequence of his unexpressed but nevertheless apparent assumption that the people he had known as a youth are still in every important respect the same, both individually and collectively, as they were when they were all together. The root of his eventual disorientation, so glaringly apparent when the shadows of the past are ultimately resurrected one by one in palpable and obviously disconcertingly unfamiliar and altered form,<sup>26</sup> lies in the fact that he has remained faithful to a static image of the past which, even if it had been a genuine representation of the people and circumstances of the period, could by its very nature apply only to a particular group of people in a particular set of circumstances at a particular time. The reality of the outside world, however, is not static, but dynamic; it has not stood still but has wrought many changes - some imperceptible, others more manifest, but all genuine and irreversible - in the character and attitudes of each individual as well as in their relationships the one to the other. Each year which passes makes the gulf between the static, changeless image of the past and

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26 Langreuter's disorientation begins with the completely unexpected and rather startling return of Just, and reaches a climax during the period when all the former childhood friends are reunited briefly before the death of Ewald's father. During this time Langreuter's discomfiture at the painful realisation of the considerable gulf between his comfortable assumptions and the reality of the situation is constantly played upon. The isolation to which his illusions have, in effect, condemned him is felt not only by himself but by the others too, and is suggested in the way they repeatedly refer to him as "der Berliner" or "der Berliner Doktor" (an appellation which Langreuter himself adopts in the narrative, embellishing it with irony and typical love of detail in combinations such as ".....ich, Friedrich Langreuter, Doktor der Philosophie, Privatdozent an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin usw. usw.,....." (B.A. 14/96)



the dynamic, developing reality of the present still wider, so that a point is eventually reached where the past and the present, the image and the fact, the illusion and the truth diverge to such an extent that there is no longer any significant point of contact holding them together. With Langreuter, the cultivated fiction of the past has superseded the barely sensed reality of the present.

It is, then, apparent that in the case of Langreuter we are dealing, in a certain sense, with a circular development: in the first instance it is his present situation - a feeling of personal frustration and inadequacy, coupled with a sense of the hostility of the world at large - which forces him, to to speak, to turn to an idealised and heightened image of the past as a means of periodic comfort and consolation; in this sense the present can be said to have influenced the past. Once Langreuter has undergone this process or, to put it less charitably, succumbed to this temptation, the procedure is, however, reversed. Now it is the past which, by virtue of his close relationship to it and his virtual dependence upon it, conditions many of his attitudes to and assumptions concerning the present; his fantasy of the past comes to govern his relationship to the present.

Does this mean that Langreuter is to be judged in totally negative terms? Does Raabe denounce his escape into memory, employing him only as a warning example to other people? Is he, in fact, condemned out of hand? Although it might appear so - at least by implication - from what we have seen so far, I do not think that in Alte Nester the issue is presented in such satisfyingly unambiguous terms, for Raabe does hint here and there that the trap which Langreuter has fallen into need not be permanent and inescapable.

This impression arises in the first instance from indications that, both during the short reunion in Werden and in the course of his writing out the narrative, Langreuter undergoes at least a partial awakening to a sense of fantasy and delusion. Langreuter himself at no point comments explicitly on this development - perhaps because he himself is only vaguely aware of it - but it is nevertheless suggested strongly in a number of indirect ways. Above all, it emerges quite clearly and definitely from a distinct and significant change in his attitude to sun and shade.

At an earlier stage<sup>27</sup> we saw that the connotations attaching to the sun in Langreuter's picture of his childhood and youth are almost entirely positive; in that context he looks back with pleasure to days of idyllic happiness enhanced by the warmth of the sun and the colour it lends to natural surroundings. Seen within the framework of his general attitude and relationship to the past, it could almost be said that with regard to its function in the world of childhood reminiscence, the sun - or Langreuter's view of the sun - acts at that time as a further agent of illusion in the present; the suggestion that the sun seemed to shine constantly and benignly throughout perpetual idyllic summers is but one of the heightening and ultimately distorting factors of selectivity involved in his picture of childhood. In that sense at least, it acts as an agent of illusion. By the time Langreuter's narrative has reached the reunion in Werden, however, his attitude to the sun assumes an entirely different direction: instead of exuding welcome warmth and colour it now seems to send out extreme heat and - more significantly

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27 See pages 152-53 of this study.



still - blinding light, and is often associated with unpleasant events and situations. This new direction is emphasised so insistently that the change in approach cannot be regarded as accidental. The regular recurrence of phrases such as „die heiße, helle Sonne des gegenwärtigen Tages“, „in dieser heißen, blendenden Mittagsstunde“ and „auf dem schattenlosen Feldwege“<sup>28</sup> is too powerful to be dismissed as mere caprice or simple coincidence. Langreuter now thinks of the sun as essentially cruel and mocking, as an agent of disillusionment, forcing people to take stock of their situation and to rid themselves of the comforting illusions they have cherished for so long. This change of attitude first becomes obvious when, relating his and Ewald's impressions on their return to the run-down and deserted Schloß Weden, he recalls the brightness of the sun, lighting up every ugly crack and, as it were, showing the two friends the futility of their self-delusions. He continues:

Sie kann sehr grausam sein, die Sonne, viel grausamer als die Nacht! Und daß sie lacht, ist nur allzu häufig nicht das Liebenswertigste an ihr. Daß Hoffnungen getäuscht, Tuschungen zunichte gemacht werden, daß die Vergänglichkeit alles Irdischen dem Menschen klargemacht werden muß, ist zwar eine recht löbliche und vernunftgemäße Aufgabe; aber ist es denn unbedingt nötig, daß dabei gelacht wird?

Die Dämmerung, die Nacht tut das auch nicht; aber die Sonne tut es, und dem armen, hilflosen Erdbewohner kommt es vielleicht nicht ohne Grund dann und wann in den Sinn, daß sie sich doch wohl auch einmal zu sehr in ihrem Rechte seinen Schmerzen, Hoffnungen und

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28 B.A. 14/214, 224 and 225.

Täuschungen gegenüber fühlen könne."<sup>29</sup>

Thereafter the sun is associated with various opportunities for the sweeping away of illusions of one kind or another, affecting most of the major characters: the sight of its shining directly in to what had once been Irene's bedroom in Schloß Werden crystallises in Ewald's mind the unpleasant realisation that the goal to which he had sacrificed long hard years of constant labour is illusory; it beats down mercilessly on Langreuter and Irene during the distressing conversation in which she reveals the tangled feelings of guilt, pride and regret which still come between her and a reconciliation with Ewald; and it finally elicits from Langreuter the reluctant admission that Just will make a more suitable husband for Eva than he could ever have done.<sup>30</sup>

The change in Langreuter's attitude to the sun illustrates a parallel change in his attitude to his own situation; it suggests that, to some degree at least, he is now aware of the falsity of his previous position. Some of the cobwebs have been swept away and some of the dark corners lit up. Langreuter eventually recognises the necessity of coming to terms with the realities of his situation and of breaking away from his hitherto addictive dependence on the past; to this degree we can speak of an awakening on his part to a

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29 B.A. 14/212. Much the same feeling is expressed when Langreuter, recalling his impressions on looking round Schloß Werden on that occasion, writes: ".....die Sonne, die durch die schmutzigen, trüben, mit Spinnweb verhängten hohen Bogenfenster drang, kreischte auch hier und lachte gell: Macht euch keine Illusionen! ... Ach, für wie ehrlich hielten wir die Sonne, als wir selber in unserer Kindheit und Jugend in diesen Räumen lachten oder unser junges Leben zuweilen so drollig ernsthaft nahmen!" (B.A. 14/213)

30 B.A. 14/214; 221-224; 225.



new realism. Nevertheless, the whole process is indicated only in a very tentative fashion, and even by the end of the narrative it is not certain what course Langreuter's further development will take, whether he will sustain the return to reality or whether he will eventually slip back once more into the illusions he seems to have shaken off for the time being. For almost every indication in one direction there is a counter-indication in another; even his precipitate departure from Werden before the funeral of Ewald's father - a very pointed action indeed - is capable of contradictory, even of mutually exclusive interpretations. On the one hand it is possible to see in his speedy return to Berlin a willingness to face up as quickly as possible to his own situation - the given reality of home, neighbours and occupation - and actively to come to terms with life as it really is. On the other hand it could be argued, I think rather more convincingly, that in leaving Werden before the funeral he is, even at this late stage, indulging in a form of escapism. If he had stayed to attend the funeral he would have been compelled to witness the symbolic passing of the last remaining representative of his own childhood world; as it is, in avoiding this inevitably bitter experience, he is able, so to speak, to retain for his previous image of the past some degree of credibility, so that he may have recourse to it some time in the future if the need to escape from the pressures of real life once again becomes overwhelming.

The course of Langreuter's further development is, therefore, obscure. His future is hedged around with doubt and uncertainty. And in a sense the same judgment might well be applied to Raabe's attitude to Langreuter: clearly he does not condemn him out of hand.

His positive qualities are not ignored entirely; his philosophical acceptance of his own situation, and his partial re-awakening to reality are factors which Raabe intends us to take seriously, and it seems apparent that he has at least a certain degree of sympathy with Langreuter's position; in terms of personal awareness, Langreuter is portrayed in a distinctly more favourable light than the philistine individuals and communities of other novels, few of whom we can imagine even conceiving the possibility, let alone necessity, of a re-appraisal of their own firmly entrenched attitudes and illusions. In addition, it is surely not going too far to suggest that the undeniable power and conviction associated with Langreuter's evocative images of the past indicate that they may serve not only as an indirect characterisation of the narrator but also as a clue to Raabe's own position.

What, then, is Raabe's own position? What is his basic attitude to the escape into memory as we see it emerge in Alte Nester? This is not a question which can be answered in one simple sentence. The escape into memory is not, as Gerald Opie suggests, depicted simply as "self-indulgence of the highest order,"<sup>31</sup> The evidence of its portrayal in Alte Nester suggests strongly that Raabe was at that time not yet ready to make such a clear and unequivocal statement. In this the first work of his mature writing devoted primarily to an exploration of the past and of its effect upon the perception of the individual in the present, his attitude is qualified and complex. He shows how the use of selective reminiscence, and of the past as an escape leads to distortion and lack of awareness, and ultimately, when

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31 Opie, op.cit., p.145.



the inevitable confrontation with reality occurs, to great pain and personal distress; and in indicating the awakening or re-awakening experienced in different degree by Langreuter and Ewald, he implies that an excessive pre-occupation with the past is something unhealthy which can and must be overcome.<sup>32</sup> But although this aspect certainly

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32 It seems clear that through the figure of Langreuter, Raabe is attempting to illustrate a general truth on the basis of a particular example. (cf. Opie, op.cit., p.143, where this assumption is applied at least to Langreuter's re-awakening to reality). The generalised nature of Raabe's concern is further emphasised by a series of what can only be deliberate parallels between the situation and development of Langreuter and those of Ewald. In some ways Ewald too takes refuge in the past: the static, latterly unreal and misleading picture of Irene - and of his relationship to her - which he builds up and clings to throughout his self-imposed years of isolation in Ireland corresponds closely to what we know about Langreuter's bachelor life in Berlin, and the naive surprise and disappointment with which he reacts to the changed situation on his return again remind us of Langreuter's response in a similar situation. Like Langreuter, Ewald had failed to reckon with the inevitable effect of change on himself, his friends and the places where they had grown up together. (cf. especially B.A. 14/213) On his return he finds that things are vastly different from his expectations (and even the physical condition of Schloß Werden comes as a grave disappointment to him B.A. 14/173); he realizes that he has been deceiving himself during his years in Ireland (cf. especially B.A. 14/205) and curses the illusions to which he had so willingly succumbed ("Der Teufel hole alle solche Malereien!" - B.A. 14/170). Secondly, like Langreuter he is - unintentionally - made to feel an outsider by the assumptions other people make about him. (He is most hurt when his father, referring to the accident which had befallen him, says: "Daß ich so dumm auch gerade während deines Besuchs sein mußte, das ärgert mich noch am meisten!" (B.A. 14/247, italics in original, given emphasis in Ewald's report)). Finally, Ewald, like Langreuter, is characterised as an outsider by the nicknames and epithets used - this time mainly by Langreuter - to refer to him without actually mentioning his name. Generally speaking, these circumlocutions (over fifty in all) can be divided into three groups, each reflecting one aspect of Ewald's situation. The first group recalls the years he spent abroad and (sometimes) the reasons for this exile ("der Irländer", "der irische Glücksbaumeister", even "der ,Narr von Engländer'" (sic)); the second relates to his profession as an engineer ("der Ingenieur", "der internationale Ingenieur Ewald Sixtus"); and the third - in painful contrast to the others - refers to his subsequent position as owner of Schloß Werden ("der jetzige Besitzer von Schloß Werden", "der jetzige Herr des Schlosses"). As often as not, two, or even three of these groups are combined ("der irländische Ingenieur", "der irische Baukünstler"), and the cumulative effect is to highlight by formal means both the isolation of Ewald during his years abroad and the painful situation into which he is precipitated on his return as a result of just that self-imposed isolation. In each of these respects his situation is virtually identical to that of Langreuter.

reflects the general tenor of the novel, Raabe is careful at the same time to imply a number of qualifications, the most important of which concerns Langreuter's future attitudes and state of mind: we saw at an earlier stage that Langreuter's initial escape into the past was undertaken primarily as a quest after some imaginative, comforting substitute for a depressingly forbidding reality; it offered him contentment of a sort - ill-conceived, transient and insipid, perhaps, but still contentment. Will he be generally happier in the future, now that he is, apparently, on the way to overcoming and rejecting the illusion on which so much of his life had previously been based? Possibly he will, but there is certainly no guarantee. There is, indeed, no suggestion anywhere in the novel that Raabe himself regards insight and happiness as mutually complementary; indeed, such indications as there are all point in the opposite direction. At the end of the day, even in spite of the considerable developments in Langreuter's own attitudes, the "Luftschloß"-philosophy he had enunciated half-way through the narrative (and which he seemed partially to have overcome) still carries a fair amount of weight; it functions throughout as a continuing caveat to the assumptions underlying the main stream of thought in the novel. Seen in this light, Alte Nester can be said to operate on two separate but mutually qualifying levels, each of which corresponds to one particular side of Raabe's personality. On the one hand he demonstrates unmistakably that an excessive preoccupation with the past at the expense of present reality is negative and unproductive, but on the other hand he implies clearly that there are certain situations in which and certain people for whom an escape into the remembered world of childhood may fulfil a



positive function. Despite his keen awareness of the dangers involved in such an escape, he is not a premature Ibsen, dominated by an untameable urge to reveal the truth at all costs, even if it should turn out to be painful and destructive; rather he shows himself to be a mature, reflective being swayed to a large degree by sympathy for the human and personal difficulties of the isolated individual. While constantly exploring the potential for absolute perception, Raabe has all the time at the back of his mind a nagging awareness of the reality of human imperfection and weakness. It is this which, for all its general clarity of approach, lies at the root of the qualifications hinted at in Alte Nester. Here his approach might, not unfairly, be characterised as a typically Raabeian mixture of idealism and pragmatism, and in the light of this the question naturally arises: what direction did Raabe's attitude to the escape into the past take thereafter? What is his final word on the subject? In order to answer that question, I should like now to examine the evidence of his last piece of connected narrative: Altershausen.

(ii). Altershausen (1902)

Altershausen is a mysterious work from several points of view and almost every aspect of its composition and interpretation poses immediate and intriguing problems. In particular, we find ourselves confronted by three major questions. Firstly, to what extent, even allowing for the fact that it was written before Raabe's seventieth

birthday, is the novel to be regarded as autobiographical?<sup>33</sup>

Secondly, for what reasons did he feel compelled to leave the manuscript unfinished? And finally - the most important question - what ideas is Raabe attempting to express in this his last novel? The first question, though extremely interesting in itself, is hardly relevant to our purposes at this stage, but I hope that possible answers to the others will suggest themselves in the course of this Chapter, since much of Raabe's depiction of the escape into memory is linked with the general pre-occupations governing the novel. Our first concern must, therefore, be the underlying theme.

Most critics who have ventured to express an opinion on Altershausen have - understandably and, I believe, correctly - taken as their starting-point the relationship between Fritz Feyerabend and Ludchen Bock. They have then proceeded, on the basis of that relationship, to interpret the novel in terms of a basic opposition between the bustling but superficial world of social and professional ambition (the world which, by its consuming claims on Feyerabend, dominates him until, after his retirement, he finds time to ponder his situation anew) and the innocent, harmonious world of childhood (the world to which Ludchen still belongs, and which Feyerabend would

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33 Raabe certainly feared that Altershausen would attract attention mainly because of its autobiographical interest, and for this reason he took pains to show the first twelve sections of the manuscript to Wilhelm Brandes shortly after his seventieth birthday, as proof that the novel did not simply record his own experience. (cf. Karl Hoppe's observations to this effect, B.A. 20/482-83). However that may be, it is obvious from the quality of his writing that Raabe is here concerned with matters which affected him very deeply at the time; whether the actual details of the retirement ceremony were penned before or after Raabe's seventieth birthday is a relatively minor issue.



like to re-enter). Hermann Pongs, for example, describes Altershausen as „(eine) Warnung vor dem ins Fach verengten Wissenschaftsgeist und (ein) Warnruf zurück zu den Ursprüngen des Gemüts, zu den mütterlichen Urbildern, die allein imstand sind, das vom männlichen Wagegeist vorwärtsgetriebene Zeitalter wieder ins Gleichgewicht zu bringen.“<sup>34</sup>, and in Franz Koch's view the central theme revolves round the conflict between what he calls „das Säkulum“ and „das innere Reich“.<sup>35</sup> Critics such as these, who in this respect represent the majority view, differ to some extent as to whether Feyerabend eventually does fulfil his wish to reintegrate himself into the world of his childhood,<sup>36</sup> but all seem to agree that the

34 Pongs, op.cit., p.632.

35 Franz Koch: Idee und Wirklichkeit. Deutsche Dichtung zwischen Romantik und Naturalismus, Düsseldorf, 1956, vol.2, p.313.

36 Those who think that Feyerabend meets with success in this respect include Wilhelm Fehse (Wilhelm Raabe. Sein Leben und seine Werke, Braunschweig, 1937, p.613: „Vor dem Lehrstuhl Minchen Ahrens' und Ludchen Bocks hat er die Antwort gefunden, die er gesucht hat.“) Hermann Pongs expresses much the same viewpoint: „Endgültig ist das Trauma überwunden. ‚Nicht mehr dabei!‘ Die dumme Verkleidung von Raum und Zeit ist abgefallen. ... Ehrfurcht vor dem All-Leben im Kleinsten hat ihn demütig gemacht, zurückverwandelt in die Kindereinfalt, ohne sich selbst zu vermindern.“ (Pongs, op.cit., p.629). Among critics whose opinion on this question is rather more negative is Gerhart Mayer („Raabes Romanfragment Altershausen. Grundzüge einer Interpretation.“, in Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft, 1962, pp.155-165 and 1963, pp.64-75, reprinted in Raabe in neuer Sicht, pp.211-28: „Doch ist es auch wieder unangebracht und zuviel gesagt, wenn mehrere Interpreten dem Helden einen vollen Lebenssieg zugestehen.“ (p.225)). Similarly, Frank C. Maatje („Ein früherer Ansatz zur ‚Stream of consciousness‘ - Dichtung: Wilhelm Raabes Altershausen“, in Neophilologus 45 (1961), pp.305-322) contends that Feyerabend fails to achieve a definitive return to true existence, as any change in spiritual state which he might achieve in Altershausen cannot be carried over into life in the real world. (p.319)

novel is essentially a criticism of contemporary social values and priorities,<sup>37</sup> that Feyerabend's attempt is laudable and that Ludchen stands for something lasting, positive, and, in more favourable circumstances, attainable. These assumptions seem to me to be highly questionable, and I shall wish to consider some of them at a later stage; for the moment, however, I should like to state, as a basis for further argument, my own view of what constitutes the underlying theme of the novel.

I believe that what Raabe has to offer us in Altershausen cannot be reduced simply to one idea, however subtly that idea may be formulated. As with most of Raabe's later fiction, we are confronted here not with a one-dimensional, linear train of thought or with a chaotic jumble of events and impressions, but rather with a rich tapestry incorporating several themes, or, more precisely, drawing together the threads of one or two major themes from various points of view. When we look closely at Altershausen, various seemingly disparate elements can in the end be seen to offer points of contact, and finally two major themes emerge. In general terms, Altershausen is concerned on the one hand with the problem of the thinking individual's attitude to an increasingly impersonal materialist society and with the position he occupies within it (this is the aspect which most critics have emphasised) and on the other hand with the probably more important question of change (an

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37 A typical statement is made by Mayer, who describes Feyerabend's reaction to his meeting with Minchen in these words: "Die fratzenhaft-wesenlose Marionettenwelt des 'Säkulum's' hat sich in nichts verflüchtigt, die Zeit scheint stillzustehen, und es offenbart sich an Minchen Ahrens in strahlender Unvergänglichkeit, das große, offene Weltgeheimnis." (Mayer, "Altershausen..." p.222)



understandable preoccupation for someone of Raabe's age at the time he composed this fragment). Thus, although at first sight the novel might seem simply to relate the somewhat nostalgic but uneasy thoughts and unexpected experiences of a recently retired Professor of Psychiatry and to concern itself, for no apparent reason, with seemingly unrelated aspects of politics and society, further reflection reveals that these individual elements cross-illuminate the two major themes (which themselves are closely related): such general social criticism as Raabe expresses - anxiety concerning industrial and military developments in Germany, and a wide-ranging feeling of unease evident in Feyerabend's first dream - is most of the time bound up with the question of change and progress, and constitutes a subsidiary aspect of the main theme, which is worked out on a personal level in the character of Feyerabend and the events by which he is affected;<sup>38</sup> in the same way, Feyerabend's experiences must be assumed to have a significance wider than their purely

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38 Raabe's concern with the effect which industrialisation was having on the environment - a concern which he had already expressed powerfully in several novels, notably Meister Autor (1873), Pfisters Mühle (1884) and, to a lesser degree, Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) - is evident in the early sections of Altershausen, where at one point the attention of Feyerabend - and of the reader - is drawn to the decline of natural life in the city parks as a result of pollution of the air and the introduction of gas and electric street lighting (cf. in particular B.A. 20/213-14); the increasing importance of military projects is hinted at in an unobtrusive passage where the narrator casually observes that the railway line to Altershausen was built more for military than for peaceful purposes (B.A. 20/230); and Raabe's general feeling of disappointment at the way Germany had developed since the unification which he, as much as anyone else, had longed for, is indicated by the fact that in his first dream (where the clock on the town hall chimes out various important dates in the history of Germany), Feyerabend "sleeps through" the chiming of the year 1870 and misses it entirely.

personal application. Altershausen is, then, neither diffuse nor excessively limited in scope; rather it exemplifies - in the way in which the main themes - the social problem and the question of change - develop and shed light on each other, the condensed, highly allusive, almost kaleidoscopic style to which Raabe attained in his later works, and which achieved possibly its most refined form in Stopfkuchen.<sup>39</sup>

One of Raabe's main concerns in Altershausen - probably his chief concern - is, then, the inevitable passing of time, and the constant tension between the forces of transience and permanence. This theme, which provides the key to our examination of the escape into memory in this novel, is worked out predominantly through the consciousness of Feyerabend and through the re-appraisal of his view of life which the changed circumstances resulting from his retirement force upon him. It is, therefore, to these aspects of the novel that I should now like to turn my attention.

The restlessness felt by Feyerabend almost as soon as he retires indicates two things at the very outset. It shows first of all that until that time the demands of society and of his profession had proved so all-consuming that they had left him no time to take stock of his situation and to question whether his way of life was as

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39 Although in this respect Stopfkuchen (1889) is probably Raabe's greatest achievement, other late novels are not far behind. In particular, the formal and stylistic merits of Das Odfeld (1887), Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) and Hastenbeck (1898) should not be overlooked. (cf. the excellent studies of two of these novels by Walther Killy - „Geschichte gegen die Geschichte: „Das Odfeld“, from his Wirklichkeit und Kunstcharakter. Neun Romane des 19. Jahrhunderts, München, 1963, pp.146-165 - and Herman Meyer - a Chapter on Hastenbeck from his Das Zitat in der Erzählkunst, Stuttgart, 1961, pp.186-206.)



fruitful and fulfilling as it might have been. (The extent and intensity of his day-by-day activity is clear when the narrator, describing the thirty years between the death of Feyerabend's wife and child and his retirement, comments: „.....spazieren war er nicht mehr gegangen. Wie hätte er dazu Zeit finden können?“).<sup>40</sup> In the second place it suggests that Feyerabend now feels that his life is unfulfilling, that he is living, as it were, in a vacuum. This vague feeling of unease is partly the result of his as yet unaccustomed inactivity and is, therefore, to be expected from someone in his position, but it stems mainly from a more positive reaction on Feyerabend's part. From his new and, at this point, novel situation, he is now able for the first time to look at his former circumstances with the eyes of an outsider, and what he sees produces in him a certain dissatisfaction and an unspecified longing. The values of society no longer appear self-evident and Feyerabend begins to ask himself whether he has, in fact, understood the meaning of life to any significant degree.

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<sup>40</sup> B.A. 20/210. Raabe's development of certain motifs in Altershausen is very intense. In particular, a group of three motifs call to mind the different stages of Feyerabend's life: his early life in Altershausen is evoked by the phrase „noch dabei" (also applied to Ludchen from time to time); his later situation as a leader of his profession and a respected member of society is alluded to in the phrase „die Wonneburgen der Walchen", and the intermediate stage - the few short years he enjoyed as husband and father - is characterised by the motif of "walking" („spazierengehen"). Thus the passage quoted above not only demonstrates in bald terms how busy Feyerabend has latterly become; it also conjures up, at least on second reading, a complete picture of two entirely different ways of life and shows how the joys of sharing and love are lost, only to be replaced by the barren comfort of ceaseless activity. (In this respect, interesting parallels might well be drawn between Altershausen and works of such a diverse character as Faust and Woyzeck).

This questioning is at first neither fully conscious nor explicitly formulated, but it is nevertheless present from a very early stage<sup>41</sup> and finds its first outlet with Feyerabend in a feeling of nostalgia for the days of his childhood.<sup>42</sup> It is as if he feels, without being fully conscious of it at this point, that the world of his childhood represents the lasting values of life which somehow have disappeared in the busy adult world of which he has become an influential member. In addition his personal situation - that of someone whose whole interest and energy have been concentrated almost exclusively on a very circumscribed, though important facet of life - now appears to him, because of its narrowness, in a predominantly negative light. There can be no doubt that it is this feeling of unease, which he cannot properly analyse at the time, which drives Feyerabend to revisit Altershausen, the place of his childhood, for

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41 The onset of this questioning might even be said to take place as early as the retirement ceremony, where the sudden and inexplicable "appearance" of Ludchen Bock seems to indicate a certain sense of incompleteness felt by Feyerabend concerning his present situation.

42 cf. B.A. 20/217, where this is put into words: „Er sah von seinem Fenster aus durch das Gewölk seiner Pfeife die Regenwolken sich verziehen und blies immer künstlerischere, aber auch immer nachdenklichere Ringe dem wieder in Blau erscheinenden Zeus zu. Dabei faßte er sich von Zeit zu Zeit an seinen fachgelehrten Puls, nachgrübelnd, ob auch das, was ihn jetzt überkam, schon mit in das trübe Lebenskapitel vom Kindischwerden und auf die abschüssige Bahn zum Marasmus senilis gehöre, dies Heimweh nach der Jugend?“



the first time in two generations.<sup>43</sup> Altershausen, and in particular Ludchen Bock, Feyerabend's schoolboy friend, whose memory seems to haunt him after his original disconcerting "appearance" during the retirement ceremony, represent for him this world of childhood, which he equates at the beginning with true breadth and innocence of life and the now half-forgotten values of the past.<sup>44</sup> Although he has no reason at this stage to imagine that they have not been subject to the same forces of change which have affected himself and his environment, he feels that, offering some sort of

43 This is confirmed on many occasions both by Feyerabend (in his capacity as narrator - see Note 52, below - and as a character) and by Minchen. At a very early stage we are told of Feyerabend's attempts, "sich gegen die toxischen und infektiösen Agenzien des Erdendaseins 'immun' (zu machen)" (B.A. 20/208) and of his desire, "sich wieder im Leben außerhalb seiner Wissenschaft wenigstens in etwas zurechtzufinden." (B.A. 20/211), and similar sentiments are expressed on several occasions (e.g. B.A. 20/260, 289, 307), the most significant being the one found during the conversation between Minchen and Feyerabend where the former says that she knows why Feyerabend has returned to Altershausen: ".....weil du ... Heimweh gehabt hast nach ... dem Besten aus deinen besten Jahren." (B.A. 20/281) The seal of authority is added to this diagnosis when the narrator comments: "Sie war im Rechte ... : er war nach Altershausen gekommen und saß hier am Maienborn mit der Vergangenheit auf der Seele, nicht bloß Ludchen Bocks wegen." (B.A. 20/281-82)

44 Although we have no way of confirming it, we suspect that Feyerabend's memories of the quality of life he enjoyed as a child are probably idealised. If this is so, he shares that characteristic with the narrators of several other late novels (Alte Nester (1879), Stopfkuchen (1889) and Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895)) whose comments on their childhood days have been shown by Hermann Helmers (Die bildenden Mächte,...) to be tinged with idealising inaccuracies. Many of Helmers' comments on these three novels might well have been applied with equal justification to others from the period 1870-1902, notably, of course, Meister Autor (1873) and Pfisters Mühle (1884). The difference between their situations and that in Altershausen (1902) is, however, that in the latter case we have no reliable alternative viewpoint against which to measure the comments of the narrator, whereas in the three novels analysed by Helmers this function is carried out by the hero, who in each case had shared many early experiences with the narrator.

link - if only of memory - with the past, they will be able to help him re-establish contact with the unspoiled life of his youth and in that way to achieve a more satisfying experience in the present. His decision to go to Altershausen represents, therefore, an attempt to come to terms with life by abandoning the unsatisfactory present for the bygone but powerfully evocative past; and if this view of Feyerabend's action is correct, we have now to ask whether such a radical and uncharacteristic step does in fact give him new insights into life and bring him the satisfaction he desires. To answer that question we must look at Feyerabend's changing relationship with Altershausen and the people he meets there, and at the essential nature of the town and its inhabitants.

During the journey to Altershausen Feyerabend prepares himself for what he considers the inevitable changes which will confront him on his arrival, but nevertheless he is overcome by dismay as he stands alone on the rapidly emptying platform. Despite this, however, and despite the shock he receives on first meeting Ludchen, he soon persuades himself that he will be able to adapt to the ways and values of the local community without much trouble. Only a few minutes later he all but calls out to Ludchen: „So wirf doch die dumme Verkleidung durch Raum und Zeit ab....“, <sup>45</sup> indicating that in his present state of mind, he feels the transformation could be easily wrought. Even when he recovers his accustomed objectivity, admitting to himself the hopelessness of Ludchen's condition, he is confident that he is in command of the situation and will be able to relate to Ludchen in the most appropriate manner:

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45 B.A. 20/236.



Wir brauchen es wohl nicht hervorzuheben, daß er längst von seiner Wissenschaft aus 'unheilbar!' gesagt hatte und wußte, wie er sich auch diesem Schicksal gegenüber zu benehmen habe. (B.A. 20/236)

In spite of a momentary feeling of bewilderment, his confidence in the success of his mission returns when, late that night he meets Ludchen in the deserted streets and conducts him home. For a time he feels quite at one with his unfortunate companion:

Er war Kind mit dem Kinde, Idiot mit dem Idioten: Schulen, Universitäten, Lehrsäle, in denen man selber vom Katheder sprach, Land und See, alle Weisheiten, Herrlichkeiten und Königreiche dieser Erde, die großen Herren und die großen Menschen darin, alle trônes, principautés, archanges, séraphins et chérubins Schöpfers Himmels und der Erden, wie das alles im Selbstbewußtsein eines Gebildeten längeren irdischen Daseins Inhalt ausmacht und Formen bedingt - weggewischt! Nichts übrig als zwei Jungen auf dem Wege nach Hause - beide mit dem Gefühl, sich v e r s p ä t e t z u h a b e n !  
... (B.A. 20/251-52)

He feels that, on the emotional level at least, he has achieved the desired transformation. On the intellectual level too, he considers, after a conversation the following morning with the local barber, that his knowledge of the situation is adequate and that he can proceed in his mission with confidence. („Er wußte alles, was er für sich brauchte aus dem Zeitenverlauf der letzten zwei Altershausener Menschenalter....").<sup>46</sup> Later that same morning the two levels of integration seem to synthesise when Feyerabend tells Minchen that he now feels a completely different person:

Ich gebe dir mein Wort darauf, der, von dem du im Blatte gelesen haben magst, bin ich nicht diesen Morgen hier am Maienborn mit diesem Rauschen und Brodeln unter den Füßen.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> B.A. 20/264.

<sup>47</sup> B.A. 20/271.

(Whether or not he regards the transformation as permanent is, however, open to question). He feels that his goodwill, his undoubted intellectual capacity and his powers of adaptability have enabled him, as it were, to find his way back into the world of his childhood, and this conviction is demonstrated at various points in his second dream (the "nutcracker dream"), where his separate identities as Professor of Psychiatry and as the nutcracker used by the Feyerabend family of sixty years before are fused.<sup>48</sup> At no stage does Feyerabend seem aware that the relationship between himself and the world he has so suddenly and almost unexpectedly invaded could prove finally to be incompatible, yet the reader is left, even at the point of apparent success, with the disturbing feeling that all is not as it seems, that Feyerabend is really deluding himself, and that he never will be able to transfer his whole being back into a time long since past.

This at first somewhat reluctant impression arises primarily from the (by now familiar) use of paraphrases by the narrator to

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<sup>48</sup> Feyerabend, though "obviously" a nutcracker, is addressed in the dream as "Herr Professor" and "Herr Doktor" (B.A. 20/294; similar examples occur on B.A. 20/295 and 297). This fusion remains throughout the dream and is only abandoned in Feyerabend's mind as he gradually awakens (B.A. 20/298). The significance of the nutcracker-motif is twofold: firstly, the memory of the old nutcracker transports Feyerabend, as it were, over the whole of his adult life and directs his thoughts immediately to the Christmas celebrations he had experienced as a child; it thus forms a powerful link with the past. Secondly, we find out at a later stage that Ludchen had acquired that very nutcracker as a child and has kept it through all the intervening decades (B.A. 20/301). It belongs, therefore, as much to the Altershausen of the present as to that of sixty years before, and if the fusion of identities could have been carried over from the dream into reality, it would represent the complete success of Feyerabend's mission. Whether this does, in fact, happen is, of course, a question of crucial importance, which is dealt with later in this Chapter.



refer to a major character without actually using his name,<sup>49</sup> and although in Altershausen these descriptions might appear quite unimportant as isolated examples, their cumulative effect, and the pattern which emerges from their recurrent appearance throughout the novel, have something very significant to tell us concerning Feyerabend's relationship to Altershausen and its people.

The most striking aspect of the descriptions applied to Feyerabend is that for almost three quarters of the novel they imply a degree of togetherness, not to say spiritual union between Feyerabend and Ludchen, but that in the last five sections they are used to emphasise the gulf that separates - and will continue to separate - Feyerabend from his former friend and from Altershausen as a whole. With very few exceptions,<sup>50</sup> any paraphrase applied to Feyerabend up to and including the beginning of section twelve includes, with variations, the word "Kind" ("das greise Altershausener Kind", "das alte Altershausener Stadtkind", "Wer von beiden war nun in dieser Nacht das größere Kind?", "das alte Altershausener Kind", "ein

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49 cf. p.39, Note 24; p.106, Note 30; pp.127-28, Note 54; and pp.301-4, Note 31.

50 Such exceptions are few and far between, and can usually be accounted for in the individual context. Thus the early reference to Feyerabend as "der Honoratiorensohn" (B.A. 20/218) has nothing to do with his "present" situation, but is merely characterising his social status as a boy; when he is described as "der 'große Mann' aus der 'großen Welt'" (B.A. 20/234), these terms, and the quotation marks, are used to indicate that this is simply Ludchen's first impression of the new arrival, while the phrase "dem noch mal auf Besuch gekommenen Stadtsohn" (which occurs in the same paragraph) actually serves to emphasise the links between Feyerabend and Altershausen; finally, when he is referred to as "das Ältere (Gespenst)" (B.A. 20/261), we think not so much of his supposed insubstantiality as of the incredulity with which Feyerabend and the young George react to the realisation that both of them, as well as Feyerabend's father and George's grandfather, form part of the same community.

anderes jung gebliebenes, altes, greises Kind").<sup>51</sup> This suggests not only that Feyerabend has in some way reverted to his former childhood state and that he is aware of this (for there can be little doubt that Gerhart Mayer's identification of Feyerabend with the narrator is correct),<sup>52</sup> but also, as I indicated above, that there is some sort of timeless, unbreakable union between Feyerabend and Ludchen, since most of the descriptions applied to the latter compare very closely to the examples given concerning Feyerabend. In particular, the word "Kind" is used again and again, emphasising deliberately - and almost to the point of exasperation as far as the reader is concerned - the apparently fundamental link between the two main characters ("das alte blödsinnige Stadtkind", "beide alte Kinder von Altershausen" - including Feyerabend, "das Kind von Altershausen", "das unbeholfene, greise Kind", "das alte Kind", "das große, ausgewachsene Kind", "das große Kind" - with Ludchen these descriptions carry on to the end of the novel, as there is no question of a turning-point either in his perception or his personality).<sup>53</sup> Shortly after the beginning of Section Twelve, however, the tone of the descriptive phrases applied to Feyerabend changes entirely: they are now used to stress the distance between Feyerabend and Altershausen, and in place of the word "Kind" comes the equally evocative term "Gast". ("der Gast aus der Welt Wonneburgen", "(dem) Wirklichen Geheimrat Professor Doktor und Gast der Wonneburgen der Walchen", "der ortseingeborene

51 cf. B.A. 20/244, 246, 250, 260 and 279 respectively.

52 Mayer, "Altershausen..." especially pp.211-14.

53 cf. B.A. 20/234, 235, 253, 274, 276, 287 and 310 respectively.



Inkognitogast", „der greisenhafte Gast", „der Weltwanderer und Gast von Altershausen", „(ihrem) Wundergast").<sup>54</sup> Why the switch should occur when it does and not at some other point is a matter for speculation. Those who favour a socially oriented interpretation of Altershausen would no doubt assume that the conversation between Minchen and Feyerabend (and especially the part related on B.A. 20/280-281) has brought about a change in the latter's view of life and society, and that the narrator (whom, as we saw earlier, we can regard as Feyerabend himself) reflects this change through the descriptions he offers of the central character, but this argument is vitiated somewhat by the optimistic view which Feyerabend as a character seems to demonstrate at a later stage, during the "nutcracker-dream".<sup>55</sup> Whatever the precise nature of Feyerabend's relationship to Altershausen, however, it cannot, on the basis of this development, be an intimate or a permanent one. The closer contact he seems to achieve with Altershausen, the clearer does the fundamental incongruity separating them become and, for reasons which I shall go into below, he eventually comes to see himself no longer as a member of the community but as a guest - an outsider, someone who can come and observe, perhaps even learn to a limited degree but who cannot take a full part or communicate purposefully and

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54 cf. B.A. 20/281, 291, 298, 300, 307 and 311 respectively.

55 See p.182 of this study, Note 48.

effectively;<sup>56</sup> and if this is indeed so, then his journey to Altershausen must end, if not in total failure, at least with the main aim unaccomplished.

This takes us part of the way towards an assessment of Feyerabend and of his strange undertaking. It means, for example, that we can refute the comments of Fehse and Pongs concerning the alleged success of his venture,<sup>57</sup> but it does not really deal conclusively with the underlying issues involved; it does not tell us what we most need to know - why does such an apparently gifted and experienced person as Feyerabend fail in a mission which at first seems to offer every possibility of success?

I believe that the answer to this question is twofold and that its separate aspects correspond to the two main themes of the novel (and consequently the weight attaching to these two aspects will be proportionate to the relative importance of the themes with which they are connected). First of all we could argue that Feyerabend's social position and the values he has adopted in the outside world, so to speak, are sufficient in themselves to preclude any lasting reconciliation with, not to speak of integration into the way of life he had abandoned as a child. This line of thought would lend support

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56 Feyerabend's inability to communicate with the people he meets in Altershausen is evident in his relationships with Ludchen and Minchen. He is unable to do more than make Ludchen merely believe in his existence; his declared intention of finding out "what Ludchen Bock had to say about life" has to be abandoned, despite his insistence at a comparatively late stage that something might yet be achieved (B.A. 20/289: "er mußte es nur herausbringen, was Ludchen Bock dazu zu sagen hatte!"). It is true that Minchen comes to understand his state of mind, but this is the result primarily of her finely tuned intuition, not of any insight which Feyerabend is able consciously to pass on to her.

57 See p.173 of this study, Note 36.



to and derive from a social interpretation of Altershausen, and there is certainly much to be said for it. Both Feyerabend and Minchen, for example, seem to be aware of a social and experiential gulf keeping them apart despite the physical rediscovery: Feyerabend describes his adopted home as being situated „jenseits der Berge“, a phrase which conveys with the maximum concision the very considerable barriers separating the former friends, and the great efforts which would be required to overcome them. Minchen too, though pleasantly surprised at Feyerabend's unexpected appearance, betrays her sense of distance, indeed, of incompatibility when, talking of the teacher who had succeeded Rektor Schuster in the local school, she says: „den haben sie von euch hergeschickt“.<sup>58</sup> There is no doubt that, in terms of his basic view of life, Feyerabend has grown away from the type of outlook he might have evolved had he remained in Altershausen. This is evident even in such a small thing as the previously quoted remark which he almost makes to Ludchen shortly after their first meeting: „So wirf doch die dumme Verkleidung durch Zeit und Raum ab.“ This remark is an odd mixture of schoolboy vocabulary and expression on the one hand and adult, even academic abstract conceptions on the other, indicating that although Feyerabend finds it easy, indeed almost effortless to recapture the tone of his boyhood speech, nevertheless the substance of what he is expressing, the basic thought behind the remark, is essentially intellectual and

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58 B.A. 20/286. Much the same feeling finds expression when she coaxes Ludchen into collecting mushrooms in the woods instead of acting as a porter at the station. She tells him: „da kannst du viel mehr Geld für mich verdienen als auf deinem dummen Bahnhof mit unbekannten Leuten.“ The full significance of the last phrase becomes clear when the narrator continues: „Mit unbekannten Leuten,“ murmelte der Geheimrat vor sich hin.“ (B.A. 20/283)

abstract and is thus at odds with the means he adopts to formulate it. Despite his apparent adaptation to the world of childhood, his experiences in the world outside, together with the modes of behaviour and thought which these experiences have moulded, raise an impenetrable barrier between Feyerabend and the world he wishes to re-enter. This feeling is further strengthened by the constant use which the narrator makes of Feyerabend's official titles and distinctions (reflections of his deeply rooted allegiance to society) when referring to him in the course of the novel, so that we are left with an undeniable impression that the ultimate cause of his failure to integrate into the Altershausen community is the gulf opened up by his own social position in the world outside.<sup>59</sup>

When we look solely or predominantly at Feyerabend himself, this interpretation seems plausible, and there can be little doubt that part of his difficulty can be explained in these terms. It leaves out of account, however, major aspects of the novel which point in another direction, and it is to these important elements - notably the nature of Altershausen itself and of the people Feyerabend meets there - that we must turn in order to arrive at the ultimate reason for his failure.

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59 Feyerabend's titles - expressed either as „Wirklicher Geheimrat Obermedizinalrat Professor Doktor Feyerabend" or in more modest variations - appear well over fifty times; in view of the length of the novel (in the Braunschweiger Ausgabe the text covers only 110 pages), the references to Feyerabend's official position, coming as they do at such short intervals, have almost the effect of a constant repetition and encourage in the reader the feeling that he and his professional position are one and the same thing, and that he really does not exist outside the social and professional context. (From what we know about him, however, this seems a rather unfair verdict to pass on Feyerabend, although there is certainly a barrier between him and Altershausen, and this is fairly indicated by the use of titles). By contrast the use of his family name („Fritze Feyerabend" and similar compounds) is very sparing indeed, hardly reaching double figures. Moreover, Minchen, whose sensibility is unquestioned, is unable to overcome a feeling of distance when in the presence of Feyerabend and can hardly stop addressing him as „Herr Geheimrat", correcting herself to call him Fritz only when he encourages her to do so.



Most critics who interpret the novel in social terms look on Altershausen as a living, vital community where an unbroken adherence to the lasting values of humanity has brought about the establishment and maintenance of a harmonious view of life,<sup>60</sup> and it is true that there are one or two indications that this might indeed be the case: the apple tree in the garden of what had once been Feyerabend's home suggests steady continuity;<sup>61</sup> the fact that Minchen has been asked for advice by a girl in the same situation as she had been over fifty years before could be taken to indicate the cyclical nature of things in Altershausen; and the well where Feyerabend and Minchen discuss the different courses their lives might have taken seems to imply the sort of harmonious continuity which Feyerabend is seeking. The over-all impression is, however, not one of continuity (which would necessarily entail some sort of evolutionary development) but of static torpidity: the streets and houses of the town are, as far as Feyerabend can remember, exactly as they were sixty years previously - not the slightest change seems to

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60 A typical example of this point of view is Mayer's interpretation of what Altershausen stands for: "Altershausen kennzeichnet den geistigen Standort eines Menschentums, das in seiner ungebrochenen, werthalt gefestigten Existenzweise in den Urtiefen des Seins verwurzelt erscheint." (Mayer: "Altershausen...", p.215). A similar view is taken by Opie (op.cit., pp.217-18 and 221-23), who does not, however, interpret the novel primarily in social terms.

61 The following description of the apple-tree - seen through Feyerabend's eyes - emphasises the fact that it bears new fruit with each successive year and constantly regenerates itself: "....dort, dort, den, den Apfelbaum, dessen Früchte wieder mal eben reif geworden waren wie vor zwei Menschenaltern zu dieser Jahreszeit!" (B.A. 20/266) This cannot be said, however, of many other features of Altershausen.

have been made for three whole generations;<sup>62</sup> the same families still occupy the positions of barber and nightwatchman, and in both cases Feyerabend temporarily confuses the present incumbents with their grandfathers; the Ratskeller, where he stays, is frequented only by the oldest inhabitants of the town, suggesting that Altershausen, or at least that part of it with which Feyerabend comes into contact, is an ageing, ultimately a dying community which can have nothing positive to offer him; most striking of all, perhaps, is the comparison drawn by the narrator between Altershausen and the legendary lost city of Vineta - not the buildings only but also the people seem unchanged and unchanging:

Die Stadtbewohner und -bewohnerinnen vor den Haustüren,  
die Mägde am Brunnen, die Kinder im letzten Spiel vor  
dem Schlafengehen - alles, wie es gewesen war vor zwei  
Menschenaltern, wohl erhalten wie Vineta unter dem  
Wasser-.... (B.A. 20/240)

Altershausen is not a living community; it possesses no contact with present-day realities, and its way of life can, therefore, in no sense be regarded as exemplary. The town, and the world which it represents in Feyerabend's mind and which is the object of his quest, are dead and belong solely to the past, and because of this his failure to integrate into its community cannot be ascribed entirely

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62 Feyerabend's walk from the station to his hotel confirms this: „Von dem leise hinsickernden Bach ... bis zu den Resten der mittelalttrigen Stadtmauer das Wiesental entlang und den grauen Dächern drüber und dem stumpfen Turm der Stadtkirche - von den Wäldern und Berggipfeln im Halbkreis rundum nicht zu reden - alles, alles, wie es war vor sechzig Jahren, alles, wie Fritze Feyerabend es hier gelassen hatte...." (B.A. 20/235); and when, at a later stage, he tries to clarify to himself his first impressions, the same factor re-emerges: „Alles, was ihm aus dem Gedächtnis abhanden gekommen war, noch vorhanden ohne die geringste Veränderung seit dem Tage seines Auszugs aus dieser ersten Erdenheimat!" (B.A. 20/238)



or even primarily to the barrier which his allegiance to outside society has raised; the barrier which prevents any meaningful contact between Feyerabend and Altershausen is, in the last analysis, not of his own making; it is one which no one, whatever his circumstances or character, could have surmounted - it is, to alter the image somewhat, the unbridgeable gulf between present and past, living and dead.

Further weight is given to this interpretation by the depiction of Ludchen. Although some have seen him as a positive character whose attitude to life reflects values which Feyerabend is regrettably unable to adopt as his own,<sup>63</sup> his condition does seem to be portrayed in a pitiable, not to say grotesque light. The contrast between his situation and that of Feyerabend is painfully obvious to the narrator, who at one point becomes so embarrassed by it that he can only bring himself to call the former "den anderen" ("„Willst du wieder was, Fritze?" (sagte Ludchen). Und in den Greisenaugen des - anderen blitzte die ganze Jungens-Taugenichtigkeit wie vor sechzig Jahren.")<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the last description we are given of him suggests not a person in whom the unchanging element of the human personality has been preserved intact (as Mayer and Frank

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63 Mayer, for example, sees Ludchen in this unwarrantedly positive light: "Raabe wollte in der Gestalt Ludchens ... dartun, daß der Mensch unter allen Umständen in seiner eigentlichen Wesensart unverändert bleibt." (Mayer, "Altershausen...", p.216). This interpretation seems to me, for the reasons I now wish to present, arbitrary and misleading.

64 B.A. 20/303-4.

Maatje believe)<sup>65</sup> but merely someone whose mental and physical development have parted company, and who now presents an appearance which is incongruous, not to say repulsive in its associations: „Um den Pfosten der Stalltür herum erschien das geschwollene bartlose Jungens-Altgesicht des Freundes....“<sup>66</sup> Possibly more convincing than these points (which are, after all, based on the viewpoint of the narrator, himself an outsider) is, however, the following extract from Minchen's conversation with Feyerabend, at the point where she is about to explain why Ludchen is in the woods, collecting mushrooms:

„Es kommt ja leider öfter vor; aber so weinerlich wie heute morgen war er doch selten. Weinen tut das Kind ja immer, wenn es sich an der schlimmen Welt gestoßen hat, aber diesmal wollte er seinen Kaffee nicht - auch noch so süß. Was ich sonst seiner Gesundheit wegen nicht tue - ich stellte ihm die Zuckerdose hin. Er wollte nichts! Ich habe ihm all sein Spielzeug gegeben und mir von ihm in der Küche helfen lassen, was sonst bei so was immer noch am besten hilft; aber diesmal hat es gar nichts geholfen. Da habe ich denn bei dem schönen Wetter das Letzte gebraucht, um ihn wieder zu seiner Ruhe wegen seines bösen Gewissens zu bringen. Was soll man machen mit seiner Angst und seiner Ärgernis, wenn so ein armer Mensch nichts weiß, als einem seit sechzig Jahren wieder sagen, daß er nichts dafür kann, daß es die anderen, die Großen gewesen sind?“ (B.A. 20/272-73)

Minchen's sympathetic understanding does more than anything else to

65 Mayer describes Raabe's portrayal of Ludchen thus: „Es ist dem Dichter zweifellos gelungen, in der Figur des kindlich gebliebenen Greises das unwandelbare Element innerhalb der vergänglichsten Gestaltung des Menschen aufzuzeigen.“ (Mayer, „Altershausen...“, p.216). Maatje speaks of Feyerabend's confrontation with Ludchen as „(eine) Rückkehr zum wahren Sein.“ (Maatje, op.cit., p.311).

66 B.A. 20/308. In addition, Minchen uses the words „dick und unbeholfen“ (B.A. 20/305 - hardly a prepossessing combination) to describe Ludchen, adding that this physical burden - which had affected Ludchen at an abnormally early age - is a secondary condition connected to his mental state.



persuade us that Ludchen must, in fact, be regarded not as an exemplary but as a pathetic figure. When Mayer claims that Ludchen possesses „die instinktive Lebenssicherheit ..., die dem Vernunftmenschen Feyerabend abgeht" and refers to him as „einer zwar geistig beschränkten, aber in sich völlig harmonischen Existenz",<sup>67</sup> he leaves entirely out of account the insecurity and recurring misery of the child which are so clearly, if not consciously, portrayed here by Minchen. Ludchen's mental state is a gross and permanent handicap completely distorting his view of everyone and everything he comes across and causing him countless repetitions of the unrelieved anguish of the wounded child; it is not in any sense a positive virtue, a means of achieving spontaneous unreflecting harmony of existence. He - the seventy-year old trapped in the world of sixty years before - offers us in tangible human form a picture of the ultimate futility, indeed the potential tragedy of Feyerabend's attempt to re-enter the world of his childhood.

Raabe's portrayal of Altershausen and of Ludchen Bock, its most important representative - for there can be little doubt that, as far as Feyerabend is concerned, the two are practically synonymous, especially in the early stages of the novel - is, then predominantly negative.<sup>68</sup> The community, far from instilling any permanent life-

67 Mayer: „Altershausen...", p.216.

68 Ludchen and Altershausen are nowhere explicitly identified as one and the same concept, but, particularly in the earlier part of the novel, Ludchen's name seems to be mentioned whenever Feyerabend thinks of Altershausen or his impending journey there. (This association is drawn, i.a., on B.A. 20/218, 222, 223, 226, 229, 231 and 232). This is not to say that Minchen is not a significant character in her own right; indeed she is, but as far as Feyerabend is concerned her active role is not important until the closing stages of the narrative.

giving force is itself dead, or at the very least moribund, while Ludchen, far from representing the undisturbed innocence of childhood, must be seen as a pathetic figure lacking the slightest relationship to reality. Neither has anything positive and valid to offer Feyerabend in his quest for the true values of life. At most, his encounter with them produces two beneficial results. Firstly, as we have seen, it helps to crystallise his unformulated sense of unease and allow him to take a fresh look at the suspect values and priorities obtaining in the outside world. Secondly, and more important as far as we are concerned, the very failure of his enterprise shows him that fulfilment and happiness are not to be found by attempting to recreate something that has long since ceased to exist and which lives on only in the memory of the person involved.<sup>69</sup> Any such attempt must, by its very nature, be foredoomed. (That Feyerabend does, in fact, come to accept this is indicated both by the ending of the "nutcracker-dream" with its

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69 In a sense, of course, the Altershausen of sixty years before lives on also in Ludchen's distorted imagination, and it may not be going too far to suggest that he exhibits here a more extreme example of one facet of Velten Andres' relationship to Helene Trotzendorff (Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895)) - his assumption that her feelings for him, her general outlook and her position in society remain unchanged, despite the changes taking place in almost every other aspect of life (cf. pp.238-41 of this study). In this respect there are, too, obvious similarities with the situation of Fritz Langreuter in Alte Nester (1879) (see especially pp.160-63 of this study). With Velten and Langreuter, of course, there comes a time of disillusionment and consequent suffering; Ludchen, however, will never have to face that blow.



defiant slogan: „Es muß weitergeknackt werden!“<sup>70</sup> and by the detached, sometimes humorous attitude he is able to adopt as narrator).<sup>71</sup> Far from idealising the virtues of a retreat into childhood, Raabe is in Altershausen exposing such a retreat as a timorous and ultimately self-defeating exercise based on an illusory conception of the timelessness of existence. His outlook is the very opposite of escapist: through the character of Feyerabend and the experiences he is made to undergo, Raabe urges a conscious acceptance of the present and a determination to come to terms with given reality.

It is apparent, on the evidence of Altershausen (1902), that although Raabe's attitude to the past, and in particular to the escape into memory, still seems generally to conform to the pattern characterising Alte Nester (1879), there is nevertheless a slight but significant change of emphasis. The basic direction is still more or less the same: Raabe makes it clear that he regards either an excessive preoccupation with the past (as in Alte Nester) or an attempt to recreate a dead or dying world (as in Altershausen) as ill-conceived and undesirable. In both of these novels, as well as in others from the same period, he points out both the value and the

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70 This slogan, passed on by "last year's" nutcracker (Feyerabend) to his successor indicates a realisation that all beings and objects are subject to transience, that everyone and everything will pass away and be replaced at some time or another, and that the only viable attitude is acceptance, whether cheerful or resigned, of this state of affairs. This view, which, on the basis of the dream alone, is admittedly not the only defensible interpretation, is, however, supported by Feyerabend's musings as he awakens and ponders the significance of his dream: „Ja, was soll man den armen Kindern zum Troste sagen? Daß ihre Töchter so schön werden wie sie?“ (B.A. 20/298)

71 cf. Mayer's comments on this aspect of Feyerabend's presentation (Mayer, „Altershausen...“, pp.213 and 218).

peril of the past and insists that, although memories of the past may hold certain attractions - whether genuine or fanciful - their reality can neither be maintained in a magical continuum, as Langreuter tries to make himself believe, nor artificially recreated, as Feyerabend attempts to do. Despite this underlying affinity, however, Raabe appears to have shifted his ground to some degree, and there is no denying a distinct difference of atmosphere between the two novels. At an earlier stage I tried to show how in Alte Nester (1879) Raabe's criticism of the escape into memory is qualified, and muted somewhat, by the weight given there to humanitarian considerations; in that novel Raabe does not apply a standard of ruthless realism, but seeks rather to accommodate his urge to insight with his sense of human limitation and weakness;<sup>72</sup> his partial identification with Langreuter lends the narrator's

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72 In several novels written between Alte Nester (1879) and Altershausen (1902), qualifications of a similar nature make a significant contribution not only to Raabe's portrayal of the past but also to the general atmosphere of the work in question. This is particularly true of Pfisters Mühle (1884), where the delicate balance between recognition and reminiscence is maintained through the representatives of two generations: the old miller Pfister is torn between regret for the passing of a simpler age of natural humanity and the realisation that change, even if for the worse, is inevitable and is better not resisted; some day, the gloomy tomorrow will in turn be superseded by a better future. For his son, Ebert Pfister, the tension is not so acute (he calls his record of the last few weeks prior to the destruction of the old mill, after all, merely "ein Sommerferienheft"); for him the choice between acceptance of the present (which his father had felt duty bound to advise) and an adherence to the values of the past is by no means so painful. He lives for the present and the future, and is well aware of the sentimental nature of his own childhood reminiscences. Nevertheless the tension between recognition and reminiscence is sustained throughout the novel, which can in no sense be characterised either as a wistful idyll of childhood or as a total denunciation of the escape into memory. The same is true, in general terms, of Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895), where Krumhardt's sentimental longing for the spirit of the old Vogelsang is balanced by his responsible awareness of the need to relate to actual circumstances and to accept the present on its own terms.



attitude a certain degree of credibility and sympathy which it could not otherwise attain. Nothing of this is repeated in Altershausen (1902). Here, despite the undoubted ambiguities which the novel presents in some directions, and despite the problem of interpretation arising out of its fragmentary nature, Raabe's attitude to the past is almost disturbingly clear and unyielding. In this novel, Raabe establishes and maintains a consistent degree of distance between himself and his characters; even his attitude to Feyerabend is cool and detached, and lacks entirely any hint of the personal concessions he had made in the characterisation of Langreuter. Raabe has finally come to the point where he is ready, even willing, to discard the sympathetic qualifications which he had previously felt to be necessary, and to face the implications of his longstanding convictions with courage and resolution. In Altershausen, the doubts and speculations are ignored, and Raabe presents us with an unambiguously sober account of his position: man is not an independent creator; he has to adapt himself to changing reality, not pretend that he can select, mould and relive certain segments of experience at will; the past, whatever its true character may have been, should never be regarded as a substitute for the present or even as a shield from immediate realities or future fears. It is this stern, unyielding realism, this complete rejection of the escape into memory, which sets Altershausen so clearly apart from its closely related precursors. At the very last opportunity, Raabe's commitment to life becomes absolute.

#### Chapter 4 - Escape into extremism

I suggested in the introduction to this study that Raabe's concern with human perception and illusion might suitably be approached under four related headings, each of which illustrates one important aspect of the picture as a whole. So far I have examined three of these possibilities - the escape into conformity, the escape into fantasy and the escape into memory - and have posed (and attempted to answer) a number of important questions regarding Raabe's attitude to each. I should like now to try to round off to some degree the individual insights suggested earlier by means of a rather briefer consideration of the fourth category of illusion suggested previously: the "escape into extremism". I feel there is a twofold justification for attempting to do so at this stage: firstly, the regular recurrence of this phenomenon throughout Raabe's work, and secondly, its importance as a unifying and bridging element within the framework of his more general concern with the world and the individual's position within it.

It is obvious from a general reading of his work - or even of a representative sample of it - that Raabe is in many ways an obsessional writer; again and again we come across identical or similar themes and types all through the course of his literary career, and although in certain respects his attitude may change and his narrative control improve, his entire work is, in large measure at least, a continuing and evolving exploration of a fairly restricted body of basic questions, situations and dilemmas. One such recurrent preoccupation concerns the person who, for one reason or another (or, indeed, possibly by virtue of an inherent trait of character over



which he has no control) orientates his behaviour and evaluates his experiences on the basis of one or a few set, preconceived premisses, the person who tries to reduce the complexity of life to one or two simple considerations, the person who, in terms of the categories suggested above, indulges in the escape into extremism. This particular preoccupation finds expression in a considerable number of works, spread fairly evenly over Raabe's fifty years or so of creative writing. It appears (to mention only some of the most obvious examples) in Der Weg zum Lachen (1857), Der Hungerpastor (1863), Drei Federn (1865), Wunnigel (1876), Alte Nester (1879), Der Lar (1888) and Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895), and obviously held a profound and lasting fascination for him. That in itself is a measure of its significance in terms of Raabe's work as a whole.

Over and above this, however, Raabe's portrayal of the escape into extremism takes on a further significance by virtue of its function as a unifying factor drawing together certain otherwise apparently disparate elements. As I mentioned at an earlier stage, most of Raabe's mature works are characterised by multi-dimensional intensity and by a high level of cross-reference (often brought about by his use of experimental narrative forms) between separate themes; each particular aspect sheds light on others and is in turn illuminated by them.<sup>1</sup> This observation is particularly relevant to his presentation of the escape into extremism; although it is certainly regarded as a separate mode of behaviour in its own right (and may, therefore, legitimately be dealt with separately in a study such as this), it is often presented as something existing not just alongside one or other

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1 See also pp. 145-46 and 174-76 of this study.

of the categories of illusion considered earlier but rather as a common, indeed almost inevitable feature of it. There is without doubt a certain degree of extremism (in the sense in which it was defined on the previous page) involved in all three categories of illusion which we have considered so far; it plays as great a part in the narrowly circumscribed assumptions of the social conformist as it does (rather more obviously perhaps) in the subjective solipsism of the imaginative outsider, and is no less in evidence in the attempted denial of the present inherent in the escape into memory.<sup>2</sup> It is thus qualitatively different from what has gone before, in that it makes the divisions suggested in the previous three Chapters seem rather more fluid, if indeed it does not transcend them entirely, and in this way it may direct our attention in some measure away from the

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2 Indeed, the variations from work to work in Raabe's presentation of the escape into extremism are very considerable and go beyond the differences implied by the three separate categories of illusion mentioned in this context. Often the characters involved may exhibit an egoistic withdrawal from involvement with other people (for example, August Hahnenberg, Moses Freudenstein), but this is by no means always the case. Similarly, although with some characters the escape into extremism seems to stem from an inherent trait of personality which they can do nothing to avoid (Velten Andres, Fritz Langreuter), with others it is the result of some incident or relationship affecting them at some point in the course of their adult life (Hahnenberg, Prof. Homilius). Finally, although some such characters find themselves permanently at odds with the society into which they have been born (Andres), others are, at least outwardly, perfectly well integrated into the social framework, even although they do not seem to take much advantage of this. Despite all these differences one essential common element links the characters involved here, as I hope to show in the course of this Chapter.



particular and towards the general.<sup>3</sup> A consideration of Raabe's attitude to the escape into extremism may, therefore, help to draw together some of the loose threads which have been left lying for the time being, and lead towards the formulation of certain wider and more all-embracing conclusions regarding his over-all conception of and attitude to reality.

Both the importance and the function of the escape into extremism within the framework of Raabe's writing as a whole are, then, obvious, and with them in mind I should like now to turn to the question which must be answered before any others: are we meant to interpret this attitude, cast of mind or mode of behaviour in a positive or a negative sense, or does Raabe's presentation of it lack any clear-cut direction? Is it a benefit or a hindrance in coming to terms with the bewildering, pathless jungle of existence? Does the reduction of the complexity of life to one or two simple overriding considerations enable us to see the wood behind the trees, or does it go too far, chopping down so many landmarks that the traveller no longer has any sense of direction, and loses his way?

I believe that Raabe's view of this particular question is consistent throughout, although between his earlier and later works we can observe certain important modifications and developments,

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3 Because the escape into extremism is presented so frequently in conjunction with one or other of the categories of illusion considered in the previous three Chapters, it may seem at points in the course of this Chapter that I am merely reviving a case which has already been examined. For that reason it is important to stress that although these separate categories may well - and indeed do - play a part at this stage too, their particular characteristics are rather less important in the present context; what I want to concentrate on at this stage is not the individual characteristic itself but the effects, in Raabe's view, of the disproportionate or even exclusive interest with which it is invested in the mind and actions of the person subscribing to it.

reflecting both his growing formal mastery and his changing view of the world as a whole. That being the case, I should like to look in some detail at Raabe's treatment of the theme of extremism in two of his most significant novels - Drei Federn (1865) and Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895). This choice is based on two main considerations. Firstly, the quality of the novels themselves. Both have a special place in Raabe's work: Drei Federn is, as Raabe himself said, his first really independent novel.<sup>4</sup> It represents a complete break with the earlier mainly derivative, often ephemeral works which he had previously produced and is, on that ground alone, worthy of closer examination, while the central importance of Die Akten des Vogelsangs, both from the point of view of intrinsic merit and in terms of Raabe's literary development, is virtually axiomatic.<sup>5</sup> The second consideration concerns the differences between the two main characters to whom we now turn our attention: when people so outwardly different as August Hahnenberg and Velten Andres fail in

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4. Raabe seems to have recognised this even at the time of composition. Writing to his publisher Janke, he justified his refusal to allow the book to appear in instalment form, concluding: „Lassen Sie es sich nicht reuen, mir nachgegeben zu haben: ich fange erst jetzt an, meine Kunst so recht zu beherrschen und habe hoffentlich meine besten Lebensjahre noch vor mir;...." (Letter of 12.2.1865, quoted in Hans Oppermann's appendix to Drei Federn, B.A. - 9/1/492). (cf. Hermann Helmers: Wilhelm Raabe, Stuttgart, 1968, p.32: „Die endgültige Abkehr von romantischen Literaturklischees ist in der Tat deutlich.") Despite Raabe's high opinion of the work (a view which he evidently did not alter in later life), it has not received much attention from critics, and even those who have attempted to trace developments through the whole of his literary output have not, in the main, recognised the special position which Drei Federn occupies in this respect. There are, of course, some exceptions, and among those who see it as marking a new phase in Raabe's work are Siegfried Hajek (op.cit.), Thea Heinrich („Der Tod in der Dichtung Wilhelm Raabes." Diss., München, 1950), Fritz Martini (in Epochen der deutschen Literatur, Bd.V/2) and Georg Ullmann (op.cit.).

5 cf. pp.44-46 of this study.



much the same way to come to terms with their situation, then we are forced to look beyond the individual characteristics for some unifying element. In this way, the very differences which are so obvious at the outset can be stripped away in order to reveal what is for us the most important aspect: the common factor uniting the two. In the light of these considerations, I should like now to turn first of all to the escape into extremism as Raabe portrays it in Drei Federn.

(i), Drei Federn (1865)

The most obviously original aspect of Drei Federn is the narrative structure. For the only occasion in his whole literary career, Raabe employs a plurality of narrators, three in all, each of whom makes two separate contributions to the corpus of the whole. Although some aspects and events are mentioned by only one narrator, there is a considerable element of overlapping, so that most of the material is presented to us from two, three or even four varying points

of view.<sup>6</sup> Thus the form of the novel is ideally suited to emphasise in the most direct terms one of the main ideas which Raabe was trying to express: the essential subjectivity of any given viewpoint and the inevitably restricted nature of the individual's perception.<sup>7</sup>

Although this is obviously important in terms of this study as a whole, it does not concern us directly at this stage. Of more immediate importance are the figure of August Hahnenberg and the developments which are shown in his personality, for they are the medium through which we can best approach Raabe's second and probably most crucial field of interest in Drei Federn - the escape

6 Most of the elements essential to the novel are demonstrated through events which are related from two or more points of view. Indeed, most of what is said lends itself to "cross-checking" by the reader, with the exception of some events in Hahnenberg's early life, Mathilde's childhood in Hohennöthlingen and August Sonntag's account of his search for the missing Luise Winkler. Generally speaking, such material as is presented only once is used simply for introductory purposes or as background. Although only three characters have a part in the narration, it was part of Raabe's purpose to indicate a change of outlook in Hahnenberg between his first and second contributions. (There is a lapse of over thirty years between the composition of these two documents, whereas we are given to believe that August's and Mathilde's parts of the narrative were composed within a short time of each other). According to a Chapter-division noted down by Raabe some time in 1864, the novel was to be (and in fact has been) concluded as follows: "VI. Wie der Pathe Hahnenberg den Schluß machte, nachdem er angefangen hatte; doch nicht wie er angefangen hatte." (Notizbuch 2, p.34, quoted by Oppermann, B.A. 9/1/489). Thus, counting as it were two Hahnenbergs, we can truthfully say that some elements of the novel are seen from four different points of view.

7 Despite the (for Raabe) strikingly original qualities of the form used in Drei Federn (1865), it remained unique in his works. Perhaps Raabe came to consider that the situation of the manuscript's being found and constantly added to was rather too forced and artificial; alternatively (or additionally) he may have come to the conclusion that it was too direct and crude an attempt at formal reflection of the novel's intention.



into extremism.<sup>8</sup>

Although Hahnenberg's upbringing and adolescence - from the not altogether reliable perspective of the thirty-years-old Hahnenberg himself - seem somewhat odd and even grotesque, he is not, as a youth or even as a young man, essentially different from most of the "normal" people we meet elsewhere in Raabe. In fact, it is not until he is around twenty-seven years of age that, in response to events which deeply wound him emotionally, his attitude to life changes profoundly. It is then that, after hearing the news of Karoline Spierling's reluctant betrothal (for reasons of monetary advantage) to Joseph Sonntag, he determines, after an initial period of frenzied despair, to mask his feelings and to attempt to avoid as much as possible any entanglement with other people. Although his background certainly is not one which we would expect necessarily to produce a well-balanced human being, he does not seem in any obvious way abnormal until his relationship with Karoline is thus ended, and even for some time after

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8 Without doubt, Hahnenberg occupies a central position in Drei Federn. He is the only character who plays an important part throughout the whole period with which the novel is concerned; he has both the first and the last word, and his contribution to the whole is significantly longer than that of the other two narrators. (In the Braunschweiger Ausgabe, Hahnenberg's part of the narrative covers 77 pages, while August Sonntag's and Mathilde's cover 46 and 43 pages respectively). In addition, it seems that Raabe was concentrating on Hahnenberg from the outset; the first entry in his diary concerning Drei Federn reads: "9 $\frac{1}{2}$  Uhr Morg. Beginn von Hinterberger." (The word "Hinterberger" was later crossed out and replaced by "Drei Federn"). (Tagebuch, 3.1.1864, quoted by Oppermann, B.A. 9/1/488). If, as seems likely and as Oppermann assumes, Hinterberger is the name Raabe originally chose for Hahnenberg, the central position of the latter becomes all the clearer. In the light of all this it is difficult to sustain Helmers' implied elevation of August Sonntag to the position of central figure. (Helmers, Wilhelm Raabe, p.32: "Drei Federn", d.h. drei Erzähler, stellen das Schicksal des August Sonntag dar;...."). Sonntag does, certainly, occupy the centre of attention for considerable periods, but there seems little doubt, for the reasons given, that Raabe's interest lies primarily with Hahnenberg. Nevertheless, the subordinate significance of his two co-narrators should not be overlooked.

her marriage. The very feelings which he later scorns bear witness to the fact that he had not always been subject to misanthropic tendencies, and the description he gives us of his character and outlook at the end of his legal training gives a picture of a self-possessed, ambitious, polished and slightly abrasive but by no means exceptionally peculiar young man.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, after his first visit to Joseph and Karoline (some time after their marriage) he leaves, not with a hardened heart, but with feelings of regret at having, as he supposes, upset Karoline by his appearance. In Hahnenberg's case the abnormality, at least in the extreme form in which it later manifests itself, is not the inevitable outcome of an inborn feature of his personality, but the result of a decision taken by him in response to the situation he finds himself in after the death of Karoline, for whom his feelings, it should be noted, are at that point by no means dormant.<sup>10</sup>

However that may be, his reaction on hearing the news of Karoline's engagement represents the beginning of a development towards a dispassionate, emotionless approach to life which is confirmed after Karoline's death in childbirth a mere two years later. At that point, Hahnenberg commits himself to live according to a single principle, which he finds expressed in the following

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9 cf. B.A. 9/1/256: „Als ein unendlich angenehmer, wenn auch etwas verbissener junger Mann ging ich ... hervor, alt an Erfahrung, ein nicht übler Schachspieler, fähig, den stärksten Punsch zu brauen und zu vertragen. Daß mir sehr viele Leute aus dem Wege gingen, ergötzte mich mehr, als es mich kümmerte; ich hatte mir vorgenommen, nicht allzu zuvorkommend gegen die Menschheit zu sein, und darf mit gutem Gewissen sagen, daß sich niemand in dieser Hinsicht über mich zu beklagen haben wird.“

10 cf. B.A. 9/1/265-66.



motto: "Sis strenuus, audax, sollers et immisericors", or, as he himself renders it: „Sei stark, kühn, gewandt und mitleidlos."<sup>11</sup>

In a sense, the adoption of this motto by Hahnenberg is apt indeed. It was, as he himself tells us, formerly contained in the commissioning letter awarded to newly qualified surgeons. It has some sort of link with disease and, more specifically, the eradication of disease and has, therefore, a strongly positive aspect to it. Thus we might think that its adoption by Hahnenberg would have some useful therapeutic value. The way in which he applies it to himself, however, is misguided, although understandable in the circumstances. His involvement with Karoline has caused him deeply-felt anguish on two occasions and he now decides to seek protection by ignoring and trying to eliminate all emotional influence in his personality. He will guard against any repetition of this situation by living in the future only for himself and by avoiding any serious involvement with others. He sees the motto he has adopted as a rationalisation of the egoism to which he now devotes himself: „....ich nahm den Egoismus für das Licht dieser Welt und richtete mein Denken und Tun danach. ... Stark, kühn, gewandt und mitleidlos hatte ich mir meinen Weg zu bahnen;...."<sup>12</sup> Hahnenberg has, in effect, applied this motto, which is concerned with the surgeon's struggle against death, to his own defensive posture against the outside world and other people. In one way, then, he has turned the sense of the motto round completely, for whereas the enemy (against whom the qualities of strength, boldness, skill and pitilessness have to be employed) had originally been death,

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11 B.A. 9/1/361.

12 *ibid.*

he now finds himself using the same criteria against life.

Thus, in response to the (admittedly cruel) blows he has suffered, Hahnenberg vows to become completely self-reliant and to pit himself against the rest of the world, and in order to achieve self-sufficiency, he feels he must first of all attain a clinically objective view of his own surroundings. This is, however, not merely a self-centred application of a principle to which he is paying lip-service; it also leads him into an extremely narrow, one-sided way of looking at life. The very qualities of concentration and abstraction which are so necessary for the surgeon in his fight against death and disease prove to be distorting and constricting to Hahnenberg in his confrontation with life, as they make him deny the validity of several essential qualities of the human personality which he regards as a hindrance to the attainment of his aims; in particular, he spurns out of hand any suggestion that imagination and emotion have a part to play in the creation of the clearsighted man he would like himself and everyone else to be. Thus in his first narrative he describes the years of his youth as „jene im Buch meines Lebens umgeschlagene sentimentale Seite“, <sup>13</sup> and is at pains to emphasise the condescending, sometimes even contemptuous attitude which he now has towards the apparently sincere and genuine relationship he had shared with Karoline. He never misses an opportunity to cast a cold douche of irony over his youthful, romantic behaviour; he refers, for example, to his „lockiges Haar“ <sup>14</sup> and sneers at the care he took (in order to impress Karoline) over his personal appearance; and in a

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13 B.A. 9/1/257.

14 B.A. 9/1/253.



phrase which he could well have borrowed from Heine, he writes:  
 „.....ich sah sie zur holden, wenngleich ein wenig kränklichen  
 Jungfrau heranwachsen.“<sup>15</sup> He even goes so far as to deny the  
 existence of genuine friendship, to mention the death of his  
 parents "merely in passing", and to assure the reader that any  
 apparent pathos which might creep into the narrative is merely an  
 example of the false emotion assumed in court by advocates for  
 professional purposes.<sup>16</sup> A mass of evidence could be adduced on this  
 point, but perhaps the most telling factor is the way Hahnenberg  
 characterises his own narrative; this document, which records, or so  
 we are led to believe, the innermost secrets and torments of a young  
 man who has been denied the fulfilment of his deepest desires, is  
 described, with consciously sober and stark simplicity, as „diese

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15 B.A. 9/1/250. Of course, the irony which Hahnenberg adopts in his portrayal of the years of his youth makes us wonder how deep and genuine his relationship to Karoline really was (and in particular the farcical episode of the peppermints (B.A. 9/1/252) prompts doubts), but his later outburst of emotion concerning her, and the deep wound which her death inflicts on him indicate that the relationship was indeed genuine and profound; any farcical element is the result of the bitter irony in which Hahnenberg now seeks refuge, not a reflection of the way things actually were at the time.

16 B.A. 9/1/251, 256 and 250 respectively.

# Stilübungen."<sup>17</sup>

This deliberate rejection of emotion and imagination is not simply a posture which Hahnenberg strikes for a short time, only to turn to something else later; it is without doubt a firmly established way of living, which he strives for years on end to bring to a peak of perfection,<sup>18</sup> and is undertaken, as I suggested above, in the course of Hahnenberg's attempt to arrive at an objective and dispassionate view of things. It does seem, however, a rather dubiously one-sided method to adopt and we feel obliged to ask whether or not his quest ends with the clarity and wisdom he had hoped to achieve.

It is true that in some things Hahnenberg's perception is very well developed indeed. He reaches the peak of his profession, his assessment of his relationship to other people (notably to Pinnemann and the Sonntags) is clear and well-defined, and even August Sonntag admits „daß der Vormund seinerzeit und von seinem Standpunkt aus ein

17 B.A. 9/1/267. Another small but significant suggestion of Hahnenberg's deliberate and sustained rejection of the emotions is seen in the unnatural composure with which he returns Joseph's welcome: „Er errötete, so gut es ihm bei seiner Komplexion möglich war; er warf das fettige, schwarze Haar so ruckartig zurück, daß er sich fast den Kopf abgeschleudert hätte.

„August!“ rief er.

„Joseph!“ sagte ich.“ (My emphasis, B.A. 9/1/258). In addition, August Sonntag, in his first contribution, refers several times to Hahnenberg's coldness and apparent lack of feeling. He speaks of his „schön(e)s, erbarmungslose(s) Wort“ and of his „eiskalte Ironie“ (B.A. 9/1/286), and in a passage whose tone oscillates between admiration and resentment characterises with stark clarity the difference between the fairytale dream-world of his father and the brutal realism, almost cynicism of Hahnenberg. (B.A. 9/1/287-88)

18 cf. his later self-characterisation, looking back over this period: „Wahrlich, ich war ein starker Mann! . Ströme von Dinte hatten mich nicht ersäuft; ich stand fest in meinem philosophischen System - glatt und kugelförmig und ohne die geringste Handhabe zur Bequemlichkeit des liebsten Nächsten und Nachbarn. Meisterlich spielte ich Schach, und der Verfasser des Buches vom Prediger Salomo hätte seine Lust an mir haben müssen: „Alles, was dir von Händen kommt zu tun, das tue frisch; denn in der Hölle, da du hinfährst, ist weder Werk, Kunst, Vernunft noch Weisheit.““ (B.A. 9/1/366)



großer Menschenkenner war."<sup>19</sup> Yet we still feel inclined to sympathise to some degree with Mathilde Sonntag's indignant outburst: „Ich bin nur ein dummes Hohennöthlinger Mädchen, aber ich weiß mehr von den Menschen als der Herr Notar, welcher keinen einzigen Prozeß verloren hat."<sup>20</sup>

The reason for this lies in the narrow basis of his achievement, which does not represent the mastery of life which he claims to have attained.<sup>21</sup> He builds up a successful legal career because the practice of law rewards intelligence, logic and an insistence on the precise literal meaning of documents and utterances; it reflects only a part of the world outside and is in no sense a microcosm of the whole. In addition, although Hahnenberg has a clear definition in his own mind of his relationship to other people, this does not mean that his assessment is necessarily correct, and it is as well also to note that August Sonntag explicitly qualifies his praise of Hahnenberg with the phrase „seinerzeit und von seinem Standpunkt aus." Despite

19 B.A. 9/1/301. The clarity and accuracy of Hahnenberg's insight in certain respects is particularly evident in August Sonntag's recollection of his first introduction to Pinnemann. In that one incident (recalled on B.A. 9/1/299-300), Hahnenberg's view of Pinnemann (explicit in its contemptuous accuracy) and of August (implicit in his decision to bring him together with Pinnemann) is seen to be clear and decisive, and at a later stage we learn that it is almost entirely vindicated.

20 B.A. 9/1/398.

21 This claim is set out most clearly in Hahnenberg's reply to the bitter reproaches of the seventeen-years-old August: „....Ich achte deine Gefühle, sie sind anständig genug; aber ich werfe dagegen die Erfahrungen eines wohlbedachten, vorsichtigen Lebens in die Waagschale und werde mich durch Gefühle nie beirren lassen. Ich sehe die Welt mit andern Augen an als du, und die Beleuchtung, in welcher sie mir erscheint, ist die wahre." (B.A. 9/1/299)

his professional and intellectual standing, Hahnenberg's view of life is by no means as lucid as he sometimes imagines, and I believe that this failure, as well as the reasons behind it, emerges most clearly when we look at the results, in personal terms, of his continued adherence to the doctrine he adopted on Karoline's death, and at the effect of the attempted application of this doctrine to August Sonntag.

Hahnenberg's continued adherence to this doctrine has several clear results. Having renounced the possibility of emotional ties with other people, he is driven to seek fulfilment in his career, and it rewards him, after a fashion. He feels completely at home in the intensely competitive and ambitious but strictly and rationally regulated legal world and gains a certain degree of satisfaction from the cut and thrust of intellectual battle; indeed it can be said that the only positive pleasure he has in life derives from the thought that his professional success, which is considerable, is in large measure consequent upon his having remained ruthlessly faithful to his egotistical motto. This satisfaction proves, however, to be fleeting, and he comes to practice more and more frequently the attitude of mind which he has determined to cultivate - composure and resignation; „Gelassenheit.“<sup>22</sup> He is not completely successful in this and feels, despite his efforts to ignore it, a gnawing sense of emptiness. This is greatly intensified when August Sonntag - the only person with whom

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22 This nagging sense of dissatisfaction finds an echo in the experience of Karl Krumhardt (cf. pp.55-60 of this study), but in the case of Hahnenberg who, unlike Krumhardt, is unable to make compromises in order to establish for himself a balanced way of living, it becomes more and more powerful until, after the departure of August Sonntag, his „Gelassenheit“ deserts him and he tries (in vain) to seek solace elsewhere. (cf. B.A. 9/1/376-78)



Hahnenberg, at least according to his own account, has any ties<sup>23</sup> - decides, on the death of his father, to break with his mentor and go his own way. The aching emptiness and purposelessness which then overwhelm Hahnenberg are a bitter proof that however hard he had tried to resist them, the claims of the emotions are inescapable. Although he does not draw the same conclusion at this stage, both the state of his mind at the time and the sequence of events thereafter are evident from this passage in his second narrative:

Ich war zu alt und nicht sentimental genug, um dem dummen Jungen und mündigen Mündel nachzubluten wie einer abgeschiedenen oder anderwärts etablierten Geliebten; ich konnte ihn nur laufen lassen und in wenig veränderter Weise fortleben, wie ich gelebt hatte, halte es auch unter meiner Würde, pathetisch zu versichern, daß mit diesem Faktum die letzte Faser, welche mich noch mit der Menschheit verknüpfte, abgerissen sei. Ich arbeitete fort, das heißt, ich setzte in der gewohnten Weise meine Persönlichkeit dem wimmelnden Allgemeinen entgegen, nur wurde der Kampf immer mechanischer; denn da der Zweck jetzt mit meinem Leben endete, so mußte mit den kürzern Tagen, den dunkleren Schatten die große, kahle, leere Gleichgültigkeit mehr und mehr die letzte Lust an der

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23 There seems no compelling reason to doubt the sincerity of Hahnenberg's statement to this effect (B.A. 9/1/365): "....was ich ... nach dem Tode Karolinens noch an Neigung zu vergeben hatte, das häufte ich auf diesen Kindeskopf, und während mich der Knabe für einen nahen Verwandten des Hoffmannschen Sandmannes nahm, wachte ich mit Argusaugen über seine Entwicklung und grübelte, ihm den Weg freizumachen." It could be argued that his milder treatment of Joseph during the last months of the latter's life constitutes some sort of emotional tie (and it certainly betrays a change of approach on Hahnenberg's part) but viewed from the standpoint of an average relationship the level of commitment he displays is no more than minimal.

Bewegung verdrängen."<sup>24</sup>

This feeling of a void is in itself an indication that Hahnenberg is on the wrong track; his attempt to suppress or at least to ignore the emotional side of his personality leads not to the sovereign satisfaction of detachment but simply to an aching sense of loss. This is, I believe, an indication that his venture was from the beginning ill-conceived and doomed to failure. In addition, the comfortably cocooned position of dependence upon Pinnemann in which he seeks refuge from the realities of life after the departure of August Sonntag shows once more the powerful role which the emotions - here it is a question of frustration, disappointment and loneliness - claim, even in the personality of one who has tried to stifle them, and also demonstrates the state of blurred perception which such an attempt can bring about. This situation (from which Hahnenberg is finally rescued by his re-integration into society after Mathilde's visit) is alluded to by him on several occasions,<sup>25</sup> and he himself is (retrospectively) in no doubt as to what has brought about the change in relationship: he has been punished for the way in which, following the motto he had adopted many years previously, he has treated other people;

Karl Pinnemann ist mir sehr lieb gewesen als eine Studie,  
als ein sehr brauchbares Objekt sehr gefährlicher

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24 B.A. 9/1/375. Apart from its use as an illustration of Hahnenberg's state of mind at this point, the passage quoted underlines once again the defensive, individualist nature of his way of life, when his normal, continued attitude to other people is described thus: "...ich setzte in der gewohnten Weise meine Persönlichkeit dem wimmelnden Allgemeinen entgegen...." The assumption that such a relationship is a normal, even desirable way of conducting one's affairs reveals the underlying essence of Hahnenberg's approach to life.

25 cf. B.A. 9/1/376-78, 379-80, 382-83 and 389.



Untersuchungen. Und so bin ich denn auch gestraft worden, wie ich gesündigt habe: die ganz gewöhnliche, schuiftige Mittelmäßigkeit nahm mir die Lupe aus der Hand, um sie mir an die Nase zu werfen. (B.A. 9/1/370)

Hahnenberg finds that it is not only unwise but also impossible ever to deny completely and permanently an essential aspect of the human make-up. His quest for objectivity and abstract truth leads not to wisdom but to barrenness and frustration, and I submit that the blame for this failure lies fairly and squarely on the one-sidedness and narrowness of his enterprise.<sup>26</sup>

Thus the course that Hahnenberg's life follows between his first and his second narrative indicates the inevitable failure in which such an extreme way of life as his must end.<sup>27</sup> It might, however,

26 This conclusion is supported by what the "second" Hahnenberg writes; he finally comes to admit the validity of emotion and imagination, concepts which he had previously considered quite meaningless. Thus, in complete contrast to his former attitude (cf. B.A. 9/1/249: "Von allen Erdgeborenen weiß ein Jurist am besten mit Gespenstern umzugehen; ein Ding, welches nicht mehr vor Gericht zitiert werden kann, ermangelt für ihn jeglicher Bedeutung:...."), he is now aware of the shadow which the past can throw over the peace of mind of the more sensitive person: "Jeder Augenblick des Lebens kann zu einem Gespenst werden, welches nach Jahren hinter der spanischen Wand des Vergessens hervortritt, gleich dem Skelett in der Pantomime, und kettenrasselnd der Gemütsruhe, der beschaulichen Behaglichkeit des Sonntag-Nachmittags oder der stillen winterlichen Abendpfeife ein Bein stellt." (B.A. 9/1/358-59) (In pursuance of the comparison with Karl Krumhardt - see p.212 above, Note 22 - we observe a striking similarity between the sentiments expressed at this point by Hahnenberg and what Krumhardt tells us concerning the growth in his own mind of such feelings of insecurity: cf. p.61 of this study, Note 51). This very comparison also serves, however, to illustrate a fundamental development in Raabe's way of looking at the world; this is discussed later in this present Chapter - see pp.248-51.

27 In his second narrative, Hahnenberg himself recognises that along with the professional success he enjoyed, there grew inevitably the seeds of his personal failure and downfall. His formulation: "....mein Spiel war dem Leben gegenüber gewonnen, aber ich hatte es mir selber gegenüber verloren...." (B.A. 9/1/368) expresses something of this realisation.

be objected at this point that in the context of Drei Federn this failure is merely personal and coincidental, and that Raabe is not propounding, as it were, a "law of extremism." I believe nevertheless that his recurring concern with the theme of extremism suggests that he did have a wider interest in the subject and that he regarded it as a widespread phenomenon on which, with certain qualifications, general judgments could be made. In the case of Drei Federn this point of view is supported by the role played by August Sonntag, and by the way in which Raabe uses Sonntag's experiences to highlight Hahnenberg's shortcomings from another angle. In particular, the motives and methods which Hahnenberg applies to his ward's upbringing are relevant to this problem.

Hahnenberg's first concern, on being appointed legal mentor to August, is to ensure that the child does not grow up to share the fate of his wretched father. He fears that, unless some outside element is introduced into August's environment, the indolent, unworldly influence of the father and the strong emotional ties with the dead mother will impress themselves on the child so powerfully that he will be unable to break out and establish a more solidly based independent life for himself.<sup>28</sup> Thus he scorns and sneers at the emotional, fairy-tale atmosphere which pervades the Sonntag household,

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28 In his self-justification Hahnenberg expresses this fear (which was probably well-founded). In addition, by his choice of words, he betrays a lingering attachment to the notion (which Raabe wishes to discredit) that wisdom and imagination are incompatible: „Im harten Kampfe gegen die sanfteren Gefühle und Herzensregungen setzte ich mein Erziehungsexperiment fort. Es war wohl nötig, daß ich dann und wann die Kinderspiele unterbrach und meine schwarze Figur vor die bunte, märchenhafte Laterna magica schob. Das leichte, schnellflutende Blut der Eltern verleugnete sich nicht in dem Kinde. Der Mensch, den ich formen wollte, durfte nicht im phantastischen oder vielmehr phantasievollen Halbdunkel die Tage versitzen, durfte nicht sich diesen zauberischen Halluzinationen hingeben, welche den Geist fürs ganze Leben in eine feine blaue Wolke hüllen und ihn der Welt und die Welt für ihn zu einem mehr oder weniger reizenden, aber immer verschwimmenden, unbestimmten, unwahren Etwas machen können." (B.A. 9/1/366)



tries to drive a wedge between August and his father, treats the child in a strict, almost intimidating manner and attempts to inculcate in him a sense of the harshness of life.<sup>29</sup> In the course of the years, Hahnenberg's calculations prove correct; his seemingly cold, contemptuous treatment of August, together with the latter's complete material dependence on him, brings about exactly that reaction which he had hoped for: a burning desire for independence. August writes later of this period:

Ich fürchtete, ich verabscheute, ich haßte den Notar Hahnenberg noch so arg wie früher; aber durch alles fühlte ich klar und bestimmt durch, daß ich ihn nicht entbehren könne. Und seine Unentbehrlichkeit lag darin, daß ich mit dem besten Willen, dem unermüdlichsten Fleiß streben mußte, ihn aus meiner Seele, aus meinem Lebenskreise - loszuwerden.  
(B.A. 9/1/291)

Hahnenberg's calculations also prove accurate in other respects: the tension which he hopes to induce in the mind of August Sonntag between himself (Hahnenberg) and Joseph duly materialises,<sup>30</sup> and, speaking of his purely psychological assessment of the young August's probable development, he is justified in claiming:

Ich hatte meine Berechnungen trefflich gemacht; die Gewißheit, daß ich mich in der Abwägung der guten und bösen Kraft in der Brust dieses jungen, mir anvertrauten Lebens um keine Unze geirrt habe, wurde immer klarer: ...." (B.A. 9/1/369)

and finally, August Sonntag pays tribute to his mentor's psychological penetration when he admits that the influence of Pinnemann (which was engineered by Hahnenberg) was perhaps the only measure which could have

29 cf. in particular what August Sonntag (B.A. 9/1/287-88 and 290-91) and Hahnenberg himself (B.A. 9/1/365) say about this period in their lives.

30 cf. B.A. 9/1/290, 367.

saved him from the almost diseased state of mind in which he was imprisoned during his years of late adolescence.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, something valuable has obviously been achieved; the picture of Joseph Sonntag which we have from August and Hahnenberg shows us how debilitating an influence he would have exerted on his son were it not for Hahnenberg's continued efforts to act as a counterweight; and the very fact that August grows up aiming for something different from the way of life his father offers indicates how valuable Hahnenberg's contribution is in this respect. He is certainly entitled to claim „daß ich es war, welcher das Eisen in das Blut des Sohnes Joseph Sonntags legte und ihn vor dem Kryptogamenleben des Vaters bewahrte.“<sup>32</sup> He has ensured that his ward will lack neither stamina nor self-respect, and August is, later on, grateful to him for what he has achieved. Why is it, then, that as soon as he is legally entitled to, August rejects his mentor's way of life root and branch, choosing instead to seek advice and enlightenment from the blind young violinist Friedrich Winkler? I believe the answer is that Hahnenberg is able to offer him only one side of life. In August's circumstances this is at first a good thing, a beneficial counterweight to the equally unbalanced world of his father. Once he has reached a reasonable level of spirit and independence, however, once the influence of the father has been

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31 B.A. 9/1/300-1.

32 B.A. 9/1/366. The most obvious manifestation of the spirit with which Hahnenberg has imbued August is the latter's impassioned outburst when, at the age of seventeen, he tells his mentor that he no longer wishes to be educated at his expense or to receive any benefit whatsoever from him. (B.A. 9/1/298) At this point, however, August's revolt is easily crushed by Hahnenberg's wider experience and powerful personality.



diluted to tolerable proportions, Hahnenberg's continuing influence ceases to be productive and threatens rather to pull the young adult from one extreme into another. It is all very well for Hahnenberg to claim that he had intended in good time to give August an appreciation of the wholeness of life<sup>33</sup> - and there can be little doubt that he is absolutely sincere in these claims - but it is evident that he is simply not capable of carrying out that intention. It is most unlikely that a man such as Hahnenberg, who had deliberately cut himself off from certain realms of existence could, even with the best will in the world, succeed in imparting their nature and significance to someone whom he had previously treated as if these very aspects of life did not exist. His statement that this widening of the perspective was „die dunkelste Stelle in meinem Erziehungsplan“<sup>34</sup> is an honest though tacit admission that it was bound to fail because of the attitude he had adopted so many years previously and to which he had held ever since.

There are, therefore, two points to be considered at this stage: firstly, Hahnenberg's inability, springing from the narrowness of his own way of life, to impart to August a sense of the wholeness of life, and secondly, the alternative chosen by August. In other words, what is it that makes August the well-balanced human being whom we see so clearly through the eyes of all three narrators? The answer is certainly not to be found in the characteristics inherited from his parents; as we have already seen, these would have been totally inadequate as a means of coming to terms with life. The source of

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33 of. his protestations to this effect, B.A. 9/1/364-66.

34 B.A. 9/1/365.

his success lies rather in another direction - August is open to the influence of conflicting forces in a way that his learned mentor is not and, what is more, never has been: the „Verwirrung der Gefühle“ which arises within him when he feels caught between the forces of Hahnenberg and his father<sup>35</sup> produces a fruitful tension which stands him in good stead in later life; and when the influence of Hahnenberg threatens to become too overwhelming, he senses the danger (because his attachment to the values which his father represented has by no means been completely destroyed) and is only too ready to absorb what Friedrich Winkler has to teach him.<sup>36</sup> The various stages in his development are not marked, as they are with Hahnenberg, by successive limitation and concentration but by a discovery of new facets of life, a progressive widening of perspective. In the figure of August Sonntag, Raabe seems to be implying that the wider one's field of receptivity is and the more views of life and influences one absorbs, the better balanced and more mature one's own outlook is likely to be. This is not to say that Raabe advocates a chaotically eclectic philosophy of life, but simply that he considers a rigid, doctrinaire attitude less likely to lead to a mature outlook than a state of mind which is open to more than one side of a question and which can vary its approach according to circumstances. This is what

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35 B.A. 35/9/1/290.

36 In this context it is significant that August describes his acquaintance with Winkler as „die neue Offenbarung des Lebens“ (B.A. 9/1/310). In addition, the way in which his life develops with the conquering of progressively wider horizons and hitherto undreamed-of insights, is made clear by his statement: „Nun begann ich mein Dasein zum zweitenmal von den dunkelsten Anfängen an zu leben.“ (B.A. 9/1/310). (This is also, by implication, a criticism of the narrowness of view which Hahnenberg had attempted to impart to August).



August means when he says:

Das waren die großen Kontraste meines Daseins: der Pate Hahnenberg und mein Vater, der Agent Karl Pinnemann und der blindgeborene Friedrich Winkler, und ich habe später klar die Logik der Vorsehung erkannt, welche mich zuerst in den schwankenden Widerstreit aller Gefühle warf, um mir dann in der rechten Stunde die Hand zu bieten. (B.A. 9/1/309)

In the adult August the compassionate, imaginative nature of the father combines with the willpower and logic stimulated by Hahnenberg and the influence of the artistic and cultural sphere (represented by Friedrich Winkler) to form a personality which is remarkably balanced and well-rounded. The contrast with Hahnenberg is only too evident.

Thus both the course of Hahnenberg's life and the deliberate contrast which Raabe establishes in the harmonious development of August Sonntag lead together to two conclusions. Firstly, Hahnenberg's attempt to grapple with life by ignoring certain elements which he considered insignificant and worthless, and by limiting his attention to those which seemed to him at one point in time to be useful proves completely counter-productive. Far from enabling him to achieve a personal mastery of life and a finer degree of perception, it stifles his appreciation of many important aspects of life and makes his continued influence on his ward highly undesirable. Although other factors are involved, it is certainly the most important single cause of his failure to comprehend fully his situation and to come to

terms with it.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, Hahnenberg's fate is not seen by Raabe as personal and coincidental. He is pointing out the existence and consequences of an attitude which is to be found at all levels of society and in all sorts of people; an attitude which, by virtue of the gaps which it must leave, brings about inevitably a crippling restricted outlook on life in the person who adopts it. This is how Raabe sees the escape into extremism in his first independent novel, and it is clear throughout what general direction his thoughts are taking. Despite its clarity of intention, however, Drei Federn (1865) is in some ways unsatisfactory, and its failings stem mainly from its at that time highly experimental narrative technique which, despite its interest in historical terms,<sup>38</sup> does render the characterisation and credibility of the novel rather suspect. Even Hahnenberg, the central figure, seems at times little

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37 This being the case, it is not surprising that Hahnenberg eventually realises and records the cause of his failure. In the end he finds he is unable (for understandable reasons) to spurn completely the concept of "Gelassenheit" after which he had striven for so many years. (cf. B.A. 9/1/369-70) He does, however, reject the extreme, rigid adherence to it which he had practised for most of his adult life and, in a well-chosen image, reflects that he has made of his life a very competent black-and-white drawing but that he has neglected the equally important bright and varied colours which had been placed at his disposal from the start. Because of the resulting imbalance, the picture is not as true as it should - and could - have been: "Das Schicksal hatte mir einen trefflichen Farbenkasten und Pinsel die Fülle mit auf den Weg gegeben; an Rot und Blau, an Grün und Gold und Silber war kein Mangel gewesen: da saß ich jetzt vor dem Gemälde meines Daseins und schüttelte den Kopf. 'Richtige Zeichnung, richtige Zeichnung!' hatten Bücher und kluge Meister fort und fort geschrien, und ich hatte ziemlich richtig gezeichnet; allein die bunten Farbenmuscheln hatte ich darüber vergessen; 'ein recht mangelhaftes Kolorit!' sprachen Bücher und kluge Leute mit derselben Weisheit;"... (B.A. 9/1/395)

38 cf. Helmers' comment: "Das Werk findet heute besondere Beachtung wegen seiner Erzählhaltung." (Helmers: Wilhelm Raabe, p.32).



more than a flat cardboard character, chiefly, I feel, because the only report we have of his early life is his own acidly biased narrative, which gives an impression of a gawking, naive youth living in a worthless community among grotesque surroundings. While this almost Dickensian exaggeration is no doubt conscious, serving to illustrate indirectly Hahnenberg's character at the time he wrote his sections of the narrative, it does nevertheless make it difficult, after such a peculiar opening, to sympathise with the characters or to believe even in their poetic reality. Similarly, the entire credibility of the novel as a whole is considerably impaired by Raabe's admittedly bold and original decision to use a plurality of narrators. As I suggested earlier,<sup>39</sup> this represents an attempt in formal terms to convey the inevitable subjectivity of all individual human perspectives, and within that context it is certainly a valid stratagem. On the other hand, Raabe's insistence on the existence of a particular manuscript, which is initiated and added to by one narrator and to which four further contributions by two co-narrators are added, all over a period of thirty years, makes the narrative situation appear unacceptably contrived; in trying too hard to authenticate his tale, Raabe has only succeeded in giving it a flavour of the artificial. His bold, and, in essence, penetrating experimentation with the narrative situation is vitiated in large measure by this compromise with the demands of superficial realism and historicity, and as a result the novel loses much of its

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39 See pp.203-4 of this study.

conviction.<sup>40</sup> Drei Federn is a work of abundant promise only partially fulfilled, and the discrepancy between intention and effect so obvious here is the price Raabe had to pay for his new and suddenly blossoming independence and originality. Nevertheless, by virtue both of the crucial position it occupies in terms of his work as a whole, and of its distinct clarity of intention, it is a novel which cannot be ignored in any examination of Raabe's attitude to the escape into extremism. It stands, so to speak, at the beginning of a long line of development which culminates in the tantalising ambiguities of Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895), and it is that novel which, both by way of contrast and of confirmation, I should now like to consider.

(ii) Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895)

As far as the narrative situation is concerned, the position in Die Akten des Vogelsangs is rather more satisfactory than in Drei Federn. Although it too is essentially a novel of reminiscence, the reminiscence technique is used here too much greater effect than

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40 It is not the plurality of narrators as such which makes the narrative situation seem so contrived, for such a technique has often been employed to great effect, for example in Gerd Gaiser's novel Schlußball, where no less than ten narrators appear, but where the authenticity of the narrative is thereby enhanced. It is, rather, Raabe's clumsy attempt to establish the historicity of his tale which makes the framework unconvincing. If he had been somewhat bolder and had forced the reader to build his own bridges between the different sections of the narrative (as Gaiser does), the connections and comparisons would have emerged less obtrusively but just as clearly (as indeed they do in Schlußball), and the reader's suspension of disbelief would have been encouraged somewhat. Perhaps this is, however, asking too much of a novel written in 1865. In his article on the position of the narrator in Raabe, Hermann Helmers also draws attention to the general similarity in technique between Drei Federn and Schlußball, but comes to rather different conclusions (generally more favourable to Drei Federn) than those I have just suggested. (Helmers: "Die Figur des Erzählers...", in Raabe in neuer Sicht, p.322).



in the earlier novel:<sup>41</sup> as regards Velten Andres, for example, the skilful evocation of his youth from several points of view all finally filtered through the medium of a single narrator renders details about his later life (such as his years in America and the period after his mother's death, about which we have very little information) superfluous, as the essence of his character has already been conveyed through his and other people's memories; and the same could be said, in general terms, of the characterisation of Krumhardt, and even of Helene Trotzendorff.<sup>42</sup> Here the child is very much father of the man, and it is not difficult in this case to exercise an adequate and lasting suspension of disbelief. Similarly, Raabe's use of a single but honestly open-minded and ultimately insecure first-person narrator succeeds in giving the novel as a whole a satisfying and subtle air of subjectivity such as he had attempted unsuccessfully to suggest in the all too contrived and schematic Drei Federn.<sup>43</sup> Whereas in the earlier novel we all

41 Raabe's use of the reminiscence technique is analysed in Roy Pascal's short but informative article: "The Reminiscence-technique in Raabe", quoted above. Unfortunately, Pascal's article does not take Drei Federn into account.

42 In his article "Die Akten des Vogelsangs. Zwang und Freiheit in Wilhelm Raabes Roman", Horst Wischniewski relegates Helene to the position of a mere catalyst in the fateful development of Velten Andres: "Meines Erachtens ist Helene Trotzendorff Staffage. Raabe braucht sie einfach, um einen Velten Andres so und nicht anders agieren zu lassen." (Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft, 1974, pp.98-101; quotation from p.99). I hope to show in the course of this Chapter that she does, in fact, play a more independent, broadly based role than Wischniewski's formulation suggests.

43 The particular significance of Krumhardt's position as narrator in the Akten was discussed at an earlier stage in this study (see p.50-53).

too often have the uncomfortable feeling that we are being asked to accept a philosophical treatise clothed in the guise of a narrative, in the more mature work the intellectual background, though present, is more expertly camouflaged, so that we feel that Raabe is actually conveying to us reflections on experience, something authentic, personal and valuable in itself. What he has to say may or may not approximate to the point of view expressed in Drei Federn - that is what I now wish to establish - but there is no doubt at all that in the later novel Raabe reveals himself as a much more assured master of his craft and that as a result his narrative carries a degree of conviction and credibility to which he was unable to attain on the previous occasion.

Raabe's attitude to the escape into extremism in Die Akten des Vogelsangs is best illustrated by an examination of the character of Velten Andres. In the light of the generally favourable judgment expressed earlier,<sup>44</sup> it may seem strange that Velten should now become the focus for our consideration of another aspect of illusion, yet it is true to say that the longer we think about the peculiar and fascinating mixture of qualities which he represents, the more recurrent doubts concerning the validity of his way of life assert themselves. We find ourselves asking - albeit reluctantly - whether his grasp of reality is as complete, comprehensive and balanced as we might suppose from the comparison with Krumhardt, or whether it too is deficient, although in other ways and for different reasons. As these uncertainties express themselves most

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<sup>44</sup> cf. Chapter II, 1, especially pp.55-75, but having regard also to reservations expressed on pp.75-77.



persistently regarding Velten's relationship to Helene Trotzendorff, I should like to examine that relationship and then consider its importance for Velten in terms of his basic outlook on life.

Velten's relationship to Helene can be divided chronologically into two sharply differentiated periods - firstly their common youth in the Vogelsang and Velten's unsuccessful wooing of Helene up to the time of her engagement to Mungo, and secondly Velten's later life and his reaction to Helene's marriage. I wish first of all to look at these two stages separately, for the very differences in outward behaviour which they present suggest some important clues as to the over-all evaluation of Velten's character, and consequently to Raabe's general preoccupation with the escape into extremism.

The most obvious feature of the first stage of the relationship is its intensity. Although Krumhardt recalls with some surprise Velten's indifferent attitude to the impending arrival from the United States of Helene and her mother, there is no doubt that, from the very beginning, the two adolescents (as they are at that point) feel drawn together in a way which sets them apart from the rest of their acquaintances: as early as the mock immolation in Hartleben's hut, Velten, in accepting total responsibility for the incident, is prepared to make sacrifices in order to shield Helene; somewhat later we are shown how he reacts to Helene's mood of depression with a profound seriousness untypical of his normally flamboyant nature; and when, writing to Krumhardt about his rescue of their schoolfriend "Schlappe", who had fallen through a patch of thin ice and was in danger of drowning, he asks rhetorically: ".....was hatte das Balg mir einen Korb zu geben und mit dem Maulaffen Schlappe auf das Windeis zu laufen?", we become aware that

his reckless action was not simply the „Riesenkult“ he describes it as, but rather an expression of his feelings towards Helene, and an attempt to draw her closer to him by making her aware of these feelings;<sup>45</sup> even the continual arguments which seem to arise between Velten and Helene<sup>46</sup> bear witness to a considerable depth of feeling and to an unspoken assumption that there is something in both their natures bringing them into an intimate and providential relationship of a kind which appears at no other point in the book;<sup>47</sup> finally, Velten's decision to abandon his studies and become an apprentice tailor in order to follow what he describes as an irresistible inner compulsion to pursue Helene, even to the ends of the earth<sup>48</sup> indicates just how seriously and intensely, even

45 B.A. 19/236, 257, 265 and 264 respectively.

46 This aspect of their relationship is skilfully evoked on B.A. 19/246-47.

47 Both Velten's and Helene's realisation of this is passed on to Krumhardt shortly after Helene's departure for America, when Velten says: „....das Frauenzimmer kann wirklich nichts dafür! Es hat das Seinige in wahrhaft großartiger Weise getan, sich mir zu vereckeln. ... Na kurz und gut, das Mädchen und seine Mutter sind weg, und der Vogelsang hat Gott sei Dank! gesagt. Ich auch. Denn dies hielt kein Mensch mehr aus - selbst meine Mutter nicht.“ (B.A. 19/275) At this stage they both recognise the affinity drawing them together but feel that it must - and can - be resisted.

48 This compulsion is expressed by Velten on at least three occasions: at the outset of his student career (B.A. 19/276), several months later (B.A. 19/290-91), and at the time of his decision to become a tailor (B.A. 19/301, 302). The view of their intimate relationship as something fated is clear in the paradoxical attitude which he adopts: he is glad, in a way, that Helene has left the Vogelsang, but at the same time he feels obliged to follow her wherever she might be. Helene too, despite her lower level of sensitivity, eventually becomes aware of the same irresistible force: „....wir haben einander wieder getroffen, Karl. Wie wir uns sträuben mochten, wir mußten einander suchen - bis in den Tod, bis auf dieses harte Bett, in allem Sturm und Sonnenschein des Daseins bis hinein in diesen Novemberabend. Das war noch stärker als er, und er hielt sich für sehr stark;....“ (B.A. 19/401)



helplessly, he regards his relationship to her.

The intensity of Velten's attachment to Helene is, therefore, beyond argument. The question which concerns us more immediately at this stage, however, and to which the foregoing facts should provide the basis for an answer is this: what effect does the all-embracing, or perhaps more precisely, all-excluding intensity of this attachment have on Velten's perception of the people and things which make up his environment, and therefore on his ability to relate purposefully to them? Our first response to this question will probably be that Velten's quality of perception is universally high, and that his feelings for Helene have at least produced no measurably negative effect. He has, for example, a well-developed facility in assessing what other people are thinking and in predicting what their reaction in a given situation is likely to be (his remarks concerning the des Beaux family are a case in point);<sup>49</sup> and he shows, from adolescence onwards, a maturity and an imaginative capacity unmatched by any other character.<sup>50</sup> This unusual combination of acuteness and imagination sets him off from his friends and acquaintances as a precocious outsider, with some of the characteristics, one might almost say, of the lonely genius, but despite its attractive appeal, it does not convey the whole truth about Velten. The fact of the matter is that the level of feeling and commitment with which his relationship to Helene is imbued leads him almost inevitably into a false and unwarranted conclusion concerning that very relationship.

Velten's view both of Helene's character as such and of her

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49 B.A. 19/272-73.

50 cf. pp.70-75 of this study.

feelings for him is mistaken. Helene is in essence a shallow, materially motivated and determined personality with a hint of longing for the deeper things of life but lacking the strength to make the necessary material sacrifices. It may well be that we are not meant to condemn her for this - and there is ample evidence to suggest that Raabe attaches a considerable measure of importance to the formative influence of her changing surroundings (with fawning attention as a small child in America giving way to the gossip and contempt so often the lot of those dependent mainly on the goodwill of others)<sup>51</sup> - but it does nevertheless describe her essential nature, at least so far as we are allowed to see it. In the shooting-star scene, for example,<sup>52</sup> she gives verbal expression to her one and only fundamental desire: „....ich wunsche wie immer nur eines: daß es für mich wieder so wird, wie ich es drüben gehabt habe in Amerika als kleines Kind, ehe ich hier im Vogelsang ins Elend gebracht wurde....“<sup>53</sup> and while this outburst may to some extent

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51 In this we see Raabe's (rather late) recognition of the influence exerted on the individual by social and environmental factors. Although he had never entirely ignored this aspect of life, his earlier novels seem to contain on the one hand undifferentiated social groups and typecast caricatures (thus in a small way implicitly admitting the formative power of society) and on the other hand, autonomous individual heroes unaffected by and unrelated to any outside influences. (This is true of virtually all his work up to and to some extent including Abu Telfan (1867) and - understandably - permeates most of the humorous works written thereafter). The later serious novels dispense for the most part with this sort of portrayal and take into account to a much greater degree the influence of external factors on the individual. This change within Raabe's work is, of course, also a reflection of a more general cultural and literary shift of emphasis between the 1850s and the end of the nineteenth century.

52 cf. pp.55-56 of this study.

53 B.A. 19/259.



simply reflect her loyalty to her father in America, there can be little doubt that her basic longing is to regain the material comforts and social status she had enjoyed as a child.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, at the end of the novel she is honest enough to admit to Krumhardt that the direction her life took after the return to America (rejection of Velten, integration into monied society and marriage to the wealthy Mr. Mungo) was entirely of her own choosing and that it was consistent with the system of values to which she had subscribed from the beginning:

„Wäre ich doch wie andere, die sich damit trösten können und es auch tun, daß sie verkauft worden seien, daß es von Vater und Mutter her sei, wenn sie gleich wie andere auf dem Markte der Welt eine Ware gewesen sind! Aber das wäre eine Lüge, und gelogen habe ich nie ... . Was ich geworden bin, ist aus mir selber, nicht von meiner armen Mutter her und noch weniger von meinem Vater. In unserm Vogelsang unter dem Osterberge war ich dieselbe, die ich jetzt war, wo ich hier lag vor diesem Bett und ihn mit meinen Armen umschlossen hielt und auf seine letzten Worte wartete.“ (B.A. 19/401-2)

It is, of course, possible to argue that Helene has, in the course of time, simply mastered the art of dissembling and that she is actually hiding her true feelings - past and present - from Krumhardt, but there is no reason to assume that the straightforward honesty, so

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54 That Helene does feel a sense of loyalty to her father is not in dispute. At an earlier stage, during an argument with Velten in the local graveyard, she refuses to go home with Velten after a thunderstorm breaks out, adding: „....ich bleibe hier und denke an meinen Vater - was kümmern mich eure Toten und dummen Gewitter? In Amerika kommt das ganz anders, und kommt mein Vater, um uns wieder zu sich zu holen, so -“, cutting her thought short at the sound of another thunderclap, but concluding later on: „Ihr könnt meinetwegen beide laufen; ich finde meinen Weg schon allein. Ich denke an meinen Vater in Amerika und brauche keinen andern hier. Meine Mutter sagt, wenn er kommt, ist er reicher und vornehmer und stärker als alle hier.“ (B.A. 19/242-43) At the same time, however, the last sentence also contains a revealing insight into her social and material ambition.

characteristic of her throughout the rest of her life, has now deserted her. In any case, there would be no point in her sending for Krumhardt after the funeral unless she wanted to unburden her feelings openly and truthfully to someone who would understand the whole situation and judge it accordingly. Any objective consideration of Helene's character must, therefore, lead to the conclusion that she is as she says she is, and that any attempt to approach her personality at some deeper level or from a more oblique angle will simply confuse the issue.<sup>55</sup>

Helene's personality is not, then, one of the more problematic aspects of the novel. For all that she is affected from time to time by periodic bouts of sentimental nostalgia for the humble surroundings of her youth and adolescence, she is essentially motivated by material and social ambition, and from the human standpoint at least, she makes of her life what she wishes. This is abundantly clear, even to the casual reader, but we have to ask ourselves whether Velten, who is after all the person most vitally affected by her attitudes, sees her in this light.

The answer to this question must be a negative one. To be sure,

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55 Further support for the point of view that Raabe wanted Helene to be seen in this light is afforded by one of the alterations made in the text between the completion of the novel and the first impression. Helene's letter to Krumhardt, with which the book opens, had originally begun as follows: "Velten laßt Dich noch einmal grüßen. Er ist nun tot und hat wieder einmal seinen Willen durchgesetzt." (Noted by Meinerts, B.A. 19/458) In the definitive version, however, the emphasis in the final clause is changed: ".....und wir haben beide unsern Willen bekommen." (B.A. 19/213) I believe that this should be regarded not as a commentary on the manner in which the relationship between Velten and Helene is concluded but on the way of life which they follow (independently of each other) throughout the previous years.



much of Velten's time and mental energy is devoted to contemplation of Helene and of his relationship to her, and he, as much as anyone else, is well aware of her circumstances through the years, but his view of her behaviour is grounded in assumptions quite different from the ones suggested above. While she is still in the Vogelsang, he interprets her outbursts of despair merely as protestations of loyalty to her father, ignoring the urge for material advancement which they also express, and during adolescence he comes - admittedly in company with Krumhardt - to see Helene more as a fairy princess than as a true human being of flesh and blood.<sup>56</sup> Possibly more significantly, he remains well-informed about the life she is leading after her return to America, but he draws rather confused, indeed conflicting conclusions as to the significance of her conduct there. On the one hand he sees her assimilation to high society as a temporary aberration from the main stream of her development, undertaken partly as a result of the pressure of her new surroundings. This is clear from his reaction to a letter written by Helene some time after her arrival in America: „Das arme Wurm scheinen sie drüben schon sauber eingeseift zu haben; ich wollte, ich hätte sie heute abend auch hier bei uns, um ihr den Kopf zurechtzusetzen.“<sup>57</sup> It never occurs to him that Helene is now simply indulging a long

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56 cf. B.A. 19/246: „Während wir, Velten und ich, wie letzterer sich ausdrückte, unsern Stiefel fortgingen, wuchs unsere Kleine auf wie eine gebannte, verzauberte Prinzessin aus dem Märchenbuch der Brüder Grimm. Sie war klug und schön und wurde immer klüger und immer schöner; aber sie hatte in Lumpen zu gehen und im wilden Walde im bloßen Hemde zu irren, auf bloßen Füßen Wasser zu holen für die Küche und die goldenen Haare auf der Heide als Gänsemädchen zu strahlen.“

57 B.A. 19/290-91.

and deeply felt desire;<sup>58</sup> indeed, as we see from the metaphor he uses, his attitude is one of sympathy, considering her as he does to be the victim of her family's unscrupulous marital politics. On the other hand - and this interpretation is obviously at loggerheads with the first one - he looks at her conduct as one stage in a game which had begun in adolescence, which is now continued into adulthood, and in which both he and Helene enjoy equal status as autonomous players. When, commenting on Helene's present position, he tells Leonie des Beaux:

„(Wir haben) schon lange vor Ihrer Frage ... eine Wette auf dem Osterberge draufhin gemacht, wer von uns beiden den festesten Griff habe und den andern zu sich holen werde. Selbstverständlich und naturgemäß hat sie gegenwärtig die obere Hand,...“  
(B.A. 19/291),

he reveals an unexpressed and, I suggest, essentially childlike belief that a person's actions can be interpreted exclusively through the medium of a single, unchanging, bilateral relationship, without

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58 Frau Andres' summing-up of the situation - „Die Welt der Gewöhnlichkeit, der Gemeinheit gewinnt es uns wieder ab, die Firma Trotzendorff behält ihr Recht;...“ (B.A. 19/302) - can be interpreted according to either point of view; in either event, Velten himself is blind to the reality of his position (in this case the hopelessness of his quest for Helene).



regard to any external influences.<sup>59</sup> In thus assuming that any action of Helene's becomes meaningful only within the context of her attitude to him, he not only ignores the possible effect of the very influences which play a large part in his first speculation about her, but also assumes that she has "played by the rules" with the same direct singlemindedness that he has displayed and that, furthermore, her outlook on life remains the same, in essence, as it was - in his eyes at least - in the days of her youth.

From his more privileged standpoint the reader is readily able, for the reasons given above, to discount both these interpretations of Helene's character.<sup>60</sup> Even if this were not possible he would, however, still feel that Velten's judgment of her is not absolutely

59 Two aspects of Velten's behaviour in this respect seem to me to be essentially childlike. Firstly, he does not realise that any person or situation can and indeed must be seen in a plurality of contexts or from a plurality of standpoints; for him, every individual thing or person is an isolated phenomenon and is only as it seems to the individual observer. This is what makes him interpret all Helene's acts and her development exclusively within the context of her relationship to him. Secondly, with a child's relative unawareness of the passing of time, he assumes that (given Helene's original agreement to take part in the wager) she always has and always will continue to live according to the pattern they set out as children. Unfortunately for Velten, this is not the case in the adult world which now faces him. This aspect of Velten's behaviour is very reminiscent of Fritz Langreuter (Alte Nester) whose escape into memory occupied a substantial part of Chapter II,3 of this study; this indicates once more the high level of cross reference between different categories of illusion to be found in Raabe's mature fiction.

60 The reader has, of course, the benefit of the many differing points of view which filter through the novel and is thus able in some instances to gain a truer picture of the characters than they have of each other. He is, however, by no means omniscient, chiefly because of the insecurity which characterises the consciousness of the narrator. (cf. p.50ff. of this study).

clear-cut, since, as I suggested above, his two interpretations conflict. What is more, he gives them expression during the same conversation (on the occasion of a visit by Krumhardt and himself to the des Beaux family), provoking the suspicion that he is not really sure what motives are leading Helene in the direction she has chosen, or alternatively that he suspects the true situation but is unable to bring himself to accept it consciously, and that, in either case he is merely casting around for a convincing or comforting explanation of her conduct.

Whatever Velten really believes about Helene's motives - and it seems likely that, if he believes or tries to make himself believe in either of the two interpretations he offers, it will be the second one which attracts him more - it is clear that he does not appreciate her true character. His feeling for her - so intense and consuming - and the assumptions - so spontaneous and unquestioned - behind his assessment of their relationship produce an odd mixture of wishful thinking and innocent acceptance which effectively blinds him to the truth about her.<sup>61</sup> In the end, therefore, it becomes plain that the exclusive and overwhelmingly intense nature of Velten's relationship to Helene - in this context it is perhaps harsh to talk of onesidedness - causes him to form a

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<sup>61</sup> Velten never really loses his idealised vision of Helene as a combination of fairy princess and homely, devoted young girl; even at the end of his life he tells her, with relief and sincerity: "Du bist doch mein gutes Mädchen!" (B.A. 19/402) Thus his attraction to her causes him to indulge in constant wishful thinking about the type of person she is, so that the continued quest to which he has committed himself may seem to have a worthwhile goal. His innocent assumption concerning the true nature of things is seen in his assessment of Helene's continuing attitude to him. (cf. p.235 of this study, Note 59).



completely erroneous picture of their situation; to return to the original terms of the discussion, the extremism characterising his attitude to Helene brings about a basic misunderstanding on his part concerning their relationship.

Of course, as in the case of August Hahnenberg, it is possible to suggest (though not very convincingly) that the combination of extremism and deficient perception is purely coincidental and that no association of cause and effect exists between them. It could then be argued that in the figure of Velten Andres, Raabe is doing no more than express in literary terms the cliché that "love is blind". This point of view is certainly not completely untenable for, as we have seen, both elements of the cliché apply to Velten - he loves Helene deeply but does not see her for what she is - but I believe, nevertheless, that in creating this figure Raabe was not attempting merely to present us with an isolated case or to exemplify a particular proverbial truth. The belief that his concern is with wider principles of behaviour and their consequences is borne out by an examination of Velten's life and reactions after Helene's marriage, and so it is to that period, the second stage of their relationship, that I should now like briefly to turn.

If Velten's life had previously been taken up largely by his intense attachment to his vision of Helene, it is dominated after her marriage to Mungo by an effort to rid himself of the deep emotions which had hitherto governed his behaviour. Having suffered a severe emotional shock on one occasion, he follows a similar path to Hahnenberg and seeks protection - though more from the thought of what has happened than from the fear that something comparable could

recur<sup>62</sup> - in the cultivation of insensibility; and, like Hahnenberg, he finds a formula which expresses the essence of his new course:

„Sei gefühllos!  
Ein leichtbewegtes Herz  
Ist ein elend Gut  
Auf der wankenden Erde.“ (B.A. 19/352)

(He explains to Krumhardt that he had come across the quotation - part of Goethe's third ode to Behrisch - while thumbing through one of the books in Charles Trotzendorff's library during a soiree in the course of which Helene had told him that she could not marry him). The sheer narrow intensity of his earlier aspirations, now shattered, forces him to grasp at an equally extreme antidote,<sup>63</sup> but, once again, the radical, simple, all-or-nothing solution proves inadequate as a general cure, and this can be seen through the medium of Velten's attitude to those to whom he feels closest.

Although he still possesses considerable insight into the character and feelings of most of his friends, and even of casual

62 In this respect Velten's attitude is quite different from Hahnenberg's. He remains loyal to his vision of Helene throughout and there is really no question of his ever becoming emotionally involved with any other woman; he merely wants to forgive Helene (which he eventually does) and to try to forget the hurt he has suffered, whereas Hahnenberg lapses after a while into almost unredeemed misanthropy. Despite this, however, the implications behind Velten's development are much more fundamental and far-reaching. (cf. pp.248-51 of this study).

63 This is what Frau Feucht means when, talking about Velten's passion to be rid of all property, she tells Krumhardt: „Um ein festes Herz zu kriegen, hat er sich zu einem Tier, zu einem Hund gemacht.“ (B.A. 19/400) (cf. also Helene's comment, referring to his adoption of the „Goethespruch“: „Es war ja auch nur ein törichter Knabe, der mit seinem leichtbewegten Herzen zuerst in jenen nichtigen Worten Schutz vor sich selber suchte!“ (B.A. 19/401)



acquaintances,<sup>64</sup> Velten does not really come to terms with the people whom he claims to know best. As far as Helene is concerned, he makes virtually no comments which could throw light on his attitude to her after her marriage,<sup>65</sup> and while this may be simply an outward manifestation of the immense effort he feels he has to make in order to re-establish his self-control and recover from the blow he has suffered, it does make the nature of his feelings for her at this point somewhat obscure.<sup>66</sup> The only clues which we have suggest, however, that his view of Helene is unchanged, in spite of the way she has treated him. Firstly, just after her engagement, when one would expect his reaction to be most bitter, he seems still to regard her as the innocent object of her father's machinations: he refers to her

64. cf. also pp. 70-75 of this study.

65. A deliberate emphasis is placed on this when Krumhardt reflects to himself, during a conversation with Helene, that she was hardly ever spoken of between Velten and himself. (B.A. 19/399) Helene had assumed that the opposite would be the case.

66. The never-ending struggle to achieve this is so bitter and enervating for Velten that it sometimes seems as if his suffering would have been less if he had allowed the ebb and flow of his emotions to run their natural but painful course. He has constantly to embark on new schemes to fortify his crumbling resistance, the most spectacular being the giving away and burning of all his property after his mother's death: these "Habseligkeiten", as he calls them, remind him of the past and he feels he has to rid himself of them in order not to be overcome by the past and what it meant - and still means - to him. Even so, it is doubtful whether he ever does succeed in living up to the motto he has adopted. Krumhardt at least sees the burning of Velten's property as a reflection of his continued domination by the emotions; recalling this period in his narrative, he writes: "Worin lag nun der Zauber, der ... mich jeden Tag nach der alten Heimstätte trieb, die jetzt zu einer Stätte der Vernichtung geworden war?/ Wahrlich nicht ein unbewegliches, unbewegtes Herz, sondern ganz das Gegenteil!" (B.A. 19/371) cf. also Krumhardt's reference to Velten as "(der) Mann..., der auf der Brust das Blatt trägt mit dem ersten Vers der dritten Ode an Behrlich, ... und im grimmigsten Ernst sein Leben nunmehr darauf eingerichtet zu haben glaubt." (B.A. 19/357, my emphasis) See also p. 72 of this study, Note 69.

as „meinem in der Fifth Avenue verzauberten armen Mädchen“<sup>67</sup> and pictures her as the powerless victim of her fate.<sup>68</sup> (This reflects one of the two conflicting views he had expressed before his own journey to America). Secondly, during the last days of his life he receives and treats Helene as if they had never been separated and nothing had ever come between them; the "game" is over and Velten seems to feel that the past is simply a meaningless void, a period of no importance,<sup>69</sup> as if the mere fact of their present togetherness in some way cancelled out the previously demonstrated truth about Helene's character. It is, of course, true that their present togetherness does cancel out the truth about Helene's past behaviour and ambitions, in the sense that it makes them unimportant; this is how Velten is able to forgive her. What concerns us more directly at this point is, however, the apparent assumption still made by Velten that the reality of Helene's character does and always did correspond to his vision of her; in that sense, the illusion continues up to the end of his life. Both before and after the turning-point in their relationship, then, Velten fails, for the most part, to recognise Helene for the type of person she clearly

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67 B.A. 19/327.

68 This is clear from the tone of the letter he writes to his mother reporting the fact of Helene's engagement. (cf. especially B.A. 19/325)

69 This makes an understandably strong impression on Helene, who in turn passes on her intense emotional reaction to Krumhardt (B.A. 19/405). This, together with the sincere contentment evident when he tells Helene: „Du bist doch mein gutes Mädchen.“ (B.A. 19/402), gives us a picture of someone for whom present happiness has erased completely the memory of past disappointment. This too recalls the essentially childlike nature of his personality. (cf. p.235 of this study, Note 59).



represents.

More surprising, even shattering, for the reader as well as for Velten himself is, however, his sudden awareness of his own in some respects pitiable position. This sudden enlightenment descends on him when the grotesque German Fell, who makes his living by performing as an "ape-man" in the rather sordid music-hall which has been opened nearby, approaches him and addresses him as a kindred spirit. He introduces himself as „(einen) vom nächsten Ast ... . Vom nächsten Ast im Baum Yggdrasil" and continues:

„Man kann sich auf mehr als eine Art und Weise dran und drin verklettern, mein Herr. Mit unseren Personalbezüglichen dürfen wir uns wohl gegenseitig verschonen. Auf bürgerlich festen Boden hilft wohl keiner dem anderen wieder hinunter; aber reichen wir uns wenigstens die Hände von Zweig zu Zweig. Mein Herr, ich danke Ihnen." (B.A. 19/381)

The effect of these words on Velten is both immediate and profound. Ever since Helene's marriage he has shirked the painful task of coming to terms with his changed situation and working out the direction in which his life ought to be moving; he has, instead, wandered from district to district, living a life of unresolved contradiction, driven on by the vague, compelling urge still to follow Helene, but at the same time constantly trying to forget what has happened and to suppress the emotional side of his personality. Now, however, the words of the "ape-man" open his eyes to his present situation: he sees that his rejection of normal social values (in itself a potentially positive characteristic in Raabe's view) has proved futile because he has been unable to put a more productive conception of life in their place. The extreme concentration of his hopes and emotions on one object, and the inevitable reaction when his hopes are dashed and his emotions wounded, are, in their own way,

just as constricting as the more obviously narrow world from which he had sought to break out, and the realisation that he is permanently stuck on a branch of the tree of life that leads nowhere is not only a distressing and bitter awareness but also a perpetual one, which will haunt him for the rest of his life.<sup>70</sup> Thus, in the same way as Hahnenberg, Velten comes to see the inadequacy of any approach to life based on so extreme and limited a conception of human relationships as the ones which they have (respectively) consciously and unconsciously followed.

Velten's misconceptions are not, then, limited to the view he holds of Helene while he still has hopes of marrying her; they do not simply express in concrete terms the cliché that "love is blind", covering as they do not only his attitude to Helene after her marriage (when we should expect in any case that the shattering of his hopes would have swept away all purely romantic delusions), but also his awareness of his own situation (at least until the conversation with German Fell) and even, it might be suggested, his assessment of how far his mother really appreciates his state of

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70 Krumhardt recognises the profound and lasting shock which this incident causes Velten, and reflects: „Er tat mir in tiefster Seele leid, und zu helfen war ihm nicht: er hatte aus seinem verbotenen Vaterhause den Nachbar im Gezweig des Baums Yggdrasil mit sich auf allen seinen ferneren Wegen durch das Dasein zu schleppen. Mich und mein zitterndes, ihre Angst und ihre Tränen hinunterschluckendes Weibchen mochte er schon loswerden aus der Erinnerung an seinen letzten Abend zu Hause; aber Herrn German Fell nicht. Der blieb ihm drin!“ (B.A. 19/383).



mind.<sup>71</sup> They cover, therefore, periods and aspects of Velten's life characterised by totally different external modes of behaviour - the free, unfettered reign of the imagination, followed by a dogged but vain attempt to rid himself of the burden of the past - and are thus seen to represent the symptoms, or perhaps more accurately the consequences, of an attitude somewhat wider and more generalised than might at first seem to be the case. As I have tried to show, one common factor is present throughout and represents the root cause of Velten's illusions (and, consequently, of his misfortunes). That common factor is a complete inability or refusal to compromise any of his dearly-held aims, coupled with an evidently inborn tendency to concentrate his whole being on one and only one aspect of life - be it his idealised vision of Helene or his equally unrestrained reaction to the situation which that vision brings about. He finds himself pushed out on to the fringes of life and from that standpoint he cannot come to terms either with himself or with those who concern him most.

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71 After his return home, Velten deliberately feigns a cheerful attitude in front of his mother in order not to depress her needlessly by revealing the true extent, or even the existence, of his sense of failure and disappointment. He justifies this behaviour at some length in a conversation with Krumhardt (B.A. 19/351-52), and seems convinced that the deception is successful, but from Frau Andres' comments elsewhere, we tend to suspect that it is not. When Velten leaves for America, for example, she is afraid that, even although both mother and son would be happy if he were to marry Helene, he might return with her, only to find that what he could offer her would neither suit nor satisfy her; in this she reveals a more penetrating understanding of Helene than Velten ever achieves. In addition, her admission to Krumhardt: ".....eben, weil ich nicht an das Glück meines Velten im Sinne der Welt glaube, so möchte ich ... einen haben, der ... von uns mit vollem Verständnis erzählte...." (B.A. 19/303-4, my emphasis), also supports the point of view that she knows more about Velten and his inner life than he ever imagines.

The view that Velten's eventual ruination is primarily the result of his over-concentration and inability to compromise is lent further, indeed conclusive force when we consider the implications of two of the central motifs employed by Raabe in order to clarify his characterisation; these are the application of the term „Verkletterung“ to Velten's situation in adult life and - more cogent still - the repeated references to his injured left wrist. The motif of „Verkletterung“ is first used, by Velten himself, to characterise Helene's development after her return to America, and originates in an "actual" incident where Velten had been unable to rescue her when she had become stuck in the branches of a tree in the Osterberg.<sup>72</sup> Latterly, however, it comes to be applied to Velten himself, and is used to particularly telling effect in the painful conversation with German Fell.<sup>73</sup> Its recurrent application to Velten's position suggests once more that he has not only lost his way in life but that he has unwittingly manoeuvred himself into an extremely precarious situation from which he is totally and permanently unable to extricate himself. His commitment has been too intense and all-consuming to allow for the possibility of a fruitful re-appraisal now that its results have proved barren and illusory; his personal contact cannot extend beyond a general expression of fellow-feeling with those in a like situation, and he is left to come to terms with his own emptiness and disappointment alone; he has in the end to accept the bitter truth of the "ape-man's" words: „Auf bürgerlich festen

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72 B.A. 19/299. The wider parallels to this incident are obvious and are, in fact, taken up by Krumhardt at a later stage - cf. B.A. 19/319.

73 See pp.241-42 of this study.



Boden hilft wohl keiner dem anderen wieder hinunter; aber reichen wir uns wenigstens die Hände von Zweig zu Zweig." Raabe could hardly have chosen a clearer motif than that of "Verkletterung" to express his misgivings concerning the unrestrained singlemindedness of an individual such as Velten.

Even more insistent than this, however, are the repeated references to Velten's injured left wrist. This physical impediment, which is alluded to again and again in the course of the novel,<sup>74</sup> suggests two factors of central importance for the interpretation of his character. In the first place, it serves to highlight the separation, indeed alienation, which stands between Velten and the vast majority of his socially oriented contemporaries: it is brought about initially because when (to borrow Velten's own terminology) the "Optimatensimpel" and "Honoratiorenputte" "Schlappe" (Krumhardt's future brother-in-law) falls through a layer of thin ice, Velten is the only person with enough courage - or recklessness - to attempt an immediate rescue;<sup>75</sup> and in later years the injury itself leads to a further separation in experience between Velten and the others, as it is, for example, the cause of his being declared unfit for military service (and, therefore, of setting him apart in yet another way from those around him); indeed, on most occasions where it is mentioned, a contrast between Velten and the rest of the community is clearly implied. Secondly - and more significantly in the present context - the repeated references to his injured wrist

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<sup>74</sup> Among other occasions, it is referred to on B.A. 19/265, 276, 299, 301, 308 and 366.

<sup>75</sup> B.A. 19/264, 265. The contrasting caution of the others is innocently but clearly highlighted in Velten's letter to Krumhardt, B.A. 19/265.

can, I think, be justly construed as an oblique attempt to suggest a more general incapacity or inadequacy; as a result of the injury, Velten is forced to use his right hand to perform all the tasks previously carried out with either hand or, indeed, with both, and it seems to me that in emphasising, so to speak, his physical one-sidedness, Raabe is encouraging the reader to recognise in Velten a certain emotional and behavioural one-sidedness too.<sup>76</sup> The physical imbalance - and consequent incapacity - resulting from the injury reflects the wider imbalance - and consequent distortion - in his personality as a whole.

There seems little doubt, then, that on the evidence both of Velten's relationship to Helene and of the use of certain recurring motifs to clarify further his view of the character, Raabe clearly intends us to see Velten as a person of great potential whose whole life is tragically flawed by one overriding weakness. Although he is possessed of considerable natural gifts, a pleasing personality and a large measure of insight, the narrowness and uncompromising exclusiveness of his preoccupations blind him to the truth in the very areas where he most needs to be aware of it; and in combining these conflicting traits so convincingly in one character Raabe is, I believe, attempting to demonstrate the possibly devastating effect

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<sup>76</sup> This assumption is supported by the fact (recalled by Meinerts in his appendix to Die Akten des Vogelsangs), that all references to the injury were added by Raabe after the manuscript had been completed, indicating that he may have felt that some further pointer to the correct interpretation of Velten's character was needed. Several more changes, introduced at the same time, seem to have a similar function - laying the emphasis on the negative, or at least the ambiguous nature of Velten's personality. (These alterations are listed by Meinerts on B.A. 19/458).



which the exaggerated concentration on one aspect of life or personality - however positive or laudable it may be in itself - can have on the character and outlook of an individual - however admirable he may be in other respects. Indeed, this point of view is firmly and finally established by the contrasting role which Velten's mother plays in the narrative. She shares Velten's imaginative qualities and, like him, is not afraid to appear odd in the eyes of the community (she becomes, in fact, the last of the old Vogelsang residents and her small, old-fashioned house forms a peculiar anachronism in the greatly altered neighbourhood), but she does not carry either of these characteristics to extremes, and the fruits of her balanced approach to life are seen in the insight she has into the character of the people around her: she is the only person in the novel who understands both Velten and the representatives of normal society, and although she sympathises with Velten and believes he is right to act as he does, she realises nevertheless that the eventual outcome of his undertaking will inevitably be failure. In the same way, although not a conventional personality herself, she advises Krumhardt not to depart from the career and social position which he has set himself. Along with Velten, she is the only character in the novel who is aware that different people have to live in different ways, but whereas Velten allows this insight to degenerate into an excuse for his own unrestrained individualism, his mother achieves thereby a higher degree of toleration of other people's ways of living, and a better understanding of what lies behind their actions and attitudes. It is the imbalance in Velten's character, not the inherent qualities themselves, which leads to his misfortunes and to his

ultimate downfall.<sup>77</sup>

Thus, Raabe's attitude to the escape into extremism in Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) is broadly similar to the approach he had adopted in Drei Federn (1865). Nevertheless, each novel is set apart from the other by a distinctive flavour and atmosphere of its own. This is brought about in part by the considerable development in Raabe's mastery of narrative technique between 1865 and 1895,<sup>78</sup> but it arises also from a quite separate development in outlook which Raabe had undergone between the completion of the earlier novel and the composition of the Akten. This development centres for the most part around the nature of the hero's "conversion" to extremism,<sup>79</sup> for whereas Hahnenberg deliberately undertakes the new course as a means of self-protection and switches, as it were, consciously from normality to abnormality, the tendency to extremism seems present in Velten from the beginning. In his case, the adoption of the formula: „Sei gefühllos....“ as a guideline signifies not the onset of an extreme, one-sided attitude to life but merely a change in its direction; with him the tendency seems inherent and, consequently, outwith his power to accept or reject. For this reason he is unable

77 cf. Chapter II, 2 of this study, especially pp.136-37.

78 See pp.222-26 of this study.

79 As we have seen, it is, of course, hardly apt to speak of a "conversion" in the case of Velten. (cf. pp.237-41 of this study).



to re-integrate into normal society as Hahnenberg does, simply by an effort of will or in response to another person's concern.<sup>80</sup> In Die Akten des Vogelsangs we are faced with an altogether more comprehensively pessimistic view of life than the one which is presented in Drei Federn; elements beyond the personal control of individuals - factors which were often invoked in Drei Federn but whose influence was constantly belied by the actions and utterances of the characters - really do seem to play a powerful part in the later novel. Not only Velten but also Krumhardt and Helene are prisoners of their own surroundings and of their inborn personality, and as such they present a totally different and, I suggest, more convincing aspect than that of the seemingly autonomous characters we

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80 Both of these elements - which are instrumental in bringing about Hahnenberg's re-integration into society - are present at the time of the incident with German Fell: Velten then recognises his own position for the first time, and he is also invited by Krumhardt to stay with him and his family for a while. Despite this, however, he is unable, for the reason stated above, to make the necessary adjustments.

meet in Drei Federn.<sup>81</sup> Whether this is the result of Raabe's personal maturing and of insights gained in middle and old age, or whether it reflects rather the changing mood of the times between the 1860s and the 1890s is unimportant (it is probably true in any case to say that, in this context at least, Raabe's own development is in line

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81 In Drei Federn, verbal assent to the concept of some sort of providence or fate is expressed by each of the co-narrators at several points (e.g. Hahnenberg: ".....das Schicksal hat seinen eigenen Willen, es läßt den Esel, der am Rande des Weges grast, zwischen seinen Disteln die hübscheste blaue Glockenblume abreißen und verschlingen und hört seinem schmatzenden Yha mit Behagen und ohne Gewissensbisse zu." - B.A. 9/1/250; August Sonntag: "Das waren die großen Kontraste meines Daseins: ... und ich habe später klar die Logik der Vorsehung erkannt, welche mich zuerst in den schwankenden Widerstreit aller Gefühle warf, um mir dann in der rechten Stunde die Hand zu bieten." B.A. 9/1/309; Mathilde: ".....es fand sich wie gewöhnlich, daß sich gegen das Unvermeidliche schlecht anspringen läßt und daß ein neues Geschick einen oft über Nacht überfallen hat, ohne daß man recht weiß, wie es zugegangen ist." B.A. 9/1/325). Nevertheless, the reader must remain unconvinced of the actual influence exerted by outside factors on the characters in the novel. Both Hahnenberg and Mathilde act (at least some of the time) as if they are perfectly free to do as they wish (this applies in particular to Hahnenberg), and their self-confident individualism belies any real conviction in the existence of a higher agency. Perhaps inevitably, the more realistic presentation of the Akten is also more pessimistic. None of the main characters changes in any significant way in the course of the novel (which spans more than one generation); they are all prisoners of their own surroundings and personality and are unable, not (or not merely) unwilling, to change for the better.



with the general currents of thought of the period,<sup>82</sup> In either event, the picture of man which is offered in Die Akten des Vogelsangs is much less assured - and much less reassuring - than the rather undifferentiated reflections of autonomous humanity which confront us in the earlier novel. It is, however, also, by virtue of its honest admission of the sometimes irresistible influence of outside forces, a much more genuine and disturbing presentation of the difficulties, dilemmas and constraints of real life, whose resulting complexity is denied - with what baleful consequences we see through the example of Velten Andres - in the attempted flight into simplicity, in the escape into extremism.

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82 This is not always the case with Raabe. Indeed, for most of his life he felt himself to be both a literary and a social outsider. He constantly complained of neglect and misunderstanding in the sphere of literary criticism, and he himself took very little heed of current fashions, evolving a pattern which became more peculiarly characteristic as time went on. He had, for example, no great opinion of Freytag's immensely popular Soll und Haben ("Es ist mit den Menschen wie mit den Büchern, die man liest; das eine ist einem ans Herz gewachsen und dort geschrieben, wie Dichtung und Wahrheit, das andere liest man nach Tisch auf dem Sofa liegend, wie Soll und Haben." (Quoted in Fehse: Wilhelm Raabe..., p.636); he despised Spielhagen for his description of the author as a "Dichter-Journalist" (letter of 2nd March, 1875 to Paul Heyse, B.A. Ergänzungsband 2, pp.182-83), and, despite the development in outlook which we have just noted, he had nothing but contempt for the emergent Naturalists, whose work he saw as grossly and unduly morbid. The following utterances are particularly characteristic of his views in this regard: "Und wenn sie noch so genau den Düngerhaufen beschreiben, die Wiese im Morgentau und Sonnenglanz behält doch ihr Recht." (Fehse: Wilhelm Raabe..., p.591) and: "Eines will ich aber doch Ihnen schreiben, nämlich daß sehr viele dieser Bücher die Menschen zu mir treiben müssen und werden. Aus der physiologischen, psychologischen, pathologischen, sozialen Abhandlung heraus wieder in das Gedicht, die Dichtung; - aus der verdunkelten Krankenstube mit ihrem Eiter-und Typhusdunst, aus der Irrenhausatmosphäre und Beleuchtung in den Garten und das Haus der Kunst, über welchen allezeit die Sonne des alten Logau stehen wird!" (Letter of 21st September 1892 to Edmund Sträter, B.A. Ergänzungsband 2, p.332).

There are, then, differences in outlook and presentation between Raabe's approach to the theme of extremism in Drei Federn and in Die Akten des Vogelsangs but, as I suggested earlier, his general attitude in both novels is broadly similar. In his later work he confirms the conclusion - formed rather too glibly and brusquely in Drei Federn - that all human points of view are subjective and, therefore, liable to error, and that, on the more particular level, any approach to life which is too narrowly conceived or which leaves out of account major aspects of the human make-up, is bound to lead to misunderstanding and, eventually, disillusionment and failure, because it shuts out the individual from an appreciation of many important facets of life vital to a proper comprehension of his place in the world, and prevents the development in him of a fully rounded, balanced personality.<sup>83</sup> If, as few people would nowadays be prepared to deny, it is impossible for the individual - by virtue simply of his human individuality - ever to attain the level of insight necessary for a complete understanding of his situation, then it becomes clear that any process - whether deliberate or involuntary - which further diminishes his points of contact with

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83 Although the escape into extremism is best demonstrated by reference to Drei Federn and Die Akten des Vogelsangs, it is seen, with the same consequences, in other novels too (cf. pp.198-201 of this study). One obvious example takes us back to Abu Telfan (1867) and to the figure of Leutnant Kind, who allows his obsession with what he sees as his military duty and honour to overwhelm him and rob him of all sense of proportion. (cf. especially his own account, B.A. 7/209-213). After this leads to the death of his daughter's fiancé and the destruction of his family life, he realises the foolishness of his previous ways but, like Velten, can find nothing to put in their place; as he tells Hahēbucher, he can only wait for death: ".....der Leutnant Kind, der wird in Geduld den letzten Zapfenstreich erwarten. Das Leben ist ein ekel Ding für einen Menschen, der nichts mehr vor der Hand hat, der das Alte abtat und nichts Neues mehr vornehmen kann." (B.A. 7/223).



reality must restrict his panorama to the same degree and make his reduced view of the world more puzzling, out of context and, inevitably, distorted. This is Raabe's fundamental criticism of the escape into extremism: it causes man to make the worst of his already limited situation.

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## Chapter 5 - A search after patterns

In the foregoing Chapters I have examined what seem to me to be the four most significant and characteristic areas of interest with regard to the portrayal of illusion and illusory values in Raabe's mature work and have tried to illustrate in each case both the object of Raabe's concern and the particular methods he adopts to represent it. On various occasions I have referred briefly to certain factors common to two or more topics, but for the most part I have confined myself until now to the task of isolating certain individual elements and discussing them separately.<sup>1</sup> In view of this the question must now be faced: what common factors are involved? What patterns, if any, can be established? And, if such general patterns do exist, what do they tell us about Raabe as a writer? At this stage I should like first of all to discuss briefly one or two of Raabe's recurring preoccupations and then from that basis to attempt to answer these more general basic questions.

One of the most persistently recurring features of Raabe's writing is his concern with social and cultural questions. That is not to say that he was primarily or even significantly concerned with particular contemporary social issues - for a synopsis of his works would quickly show that he was not - but that he sustained a keen interest in the workings of society, the way in which social values are formed and maintained, and the effect which these have on the behaviour, outlook and perception of the individual. In this sense, the variety and penetration of his social criticism should not be

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1 cf. pp. 145-6 of this study.



underestimated; either by what amounts virtually to a frontal attack (as in Abu Telfan 1867), or by the portrayal of internal self-doubt (as in Die Akten des Vogelsangs 1895), or again by implied criticism through apparent concern with an opposite (as in Deutscher Mondschein (1872), among others),<sup>2</sup> he makes clear his own rejection of the claims of social conformity and social values to offer a comprehensive and truthful picture of what the world is like and what life is about. On the other hand, his criticism is by no means limited to the excesses of social conformity: as I tried to show in the Chapter "Escape into fantasy", he is just as interested in the talented individual who attempts to construct a world of his own without regard to the rights, desires and even the existence of the wider social unit; in some cases, at least, Raabe is very emphatic that the solipsism into which such people may fall is just as undesirable as the frustrating conformity which they seek to avoid; he sees all too clearly the shortcomings of too radical a reliance on exclusively individual insight. Rather surprisingly some critics, even in recent years, seem to have missed this aspect entirely, and have postulated what appears to me to be a complete fallacy concerning Raabe's intentions in this respect. H. R. Klieneberger, for example, speaks of "Raabe's apotheosis of the outsider" and accuses him - for in the context of his argument it is an accusation - of depicting

eccentrics credited with deeper insight than the socially integrated, and with moral superiority, the collective being generally presented as blindly obeying the herd instinct, engrossed in material pursuits and callously resentful of nonconformists.

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2 See Appendix A to this study, especially pp.360-69.

And Pierre Bange, in a fairly recent article, seems to share this point of view when he states that all of Raabe's novels centre on the

"antagonisme entre la société sclérosée ... et le séjour des valeurs morales dans un enclos privilégié et dans le cœur d'un homme qui échappe au déterminisme du siècle."<sup>3</sup>

There is certainly much truth in what Klieneberger says about Raabe's characterisation of the collective, but, as I argued in Chapter II, 2, I feel there is no case for maintaining, as both Klieneberger and Bange do, that Raabe in some way detaches the outsider from his environment and applies unfairly favourable standards to him. Raabe is certainly a critic of social institutions and values, but he is also more than that; the harsh realism which he often brings to bear on them is extended in almost equal measure to his portrayal of the imaginative outsider.

This measure of harsh realism also invests the second preoccupation I wish to mention at this stage: Raabe's interest in the past and in its effect on the present. As I indicated in the Chapter "Escape into memory", Raabe often confronts us with characters who show a temptation to escape into the past and to idealise their own image of bygone years and past relationships, and

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3 Klieneberger, op.cit., p.111; and Pierre Bange: "Stopfkuchen de W. Raabe. Le solipsisme de l'original et l'humour." in Etudes germaniques 24 (1969), pp.1-15 Quotation from p.4. A similar point of view is held by Maria Vogel, though she expresses it rather more tentatively: "Es ist also mit Vorsicht zu fragen, wenn einer 'Narr' genannt wird, ob er nicht, statt unter die Geisteskranken, unter die außergewöhnlich Begabten einzureihen ist." (Vogel, op.cit., p.10). These views reflect attitudes which were common in the early days of Raabe-criticism but which had apparently fallen from grace. Their recent reappearance (in the case of Klieneberger and Bange) may be a sign that the violent departures of the 1960s are in turn meeting with opposition.



while he sometimes seems to share their sorrow at the disappearance of the old world (this is particularly evident in the wistful resignation which characterises Horacker (1875) and Pfisters Mühle (1884)), this is always balanced by an opposing stress on the necessity to come to terms with the present, whether or not the past was more pleasant, and to equip oneself to face the future steadfastly. Barker Fairley's comment that

Vater Pfister could peer shrewdly into the future, even if he had no heart for moving into it<sup>4</sup>.

seems to me also to apply with curious aptness to the attitude of Raabe himself. There is here a continuing tension between inclination and the inevitable, a tension which in some works (notably Altershausen (1902)) seems to be determined in favour of the latter, but which in others remains ultimately unresolved.

These two separate areas of social concern and preoccupation with the past are, then, central features in Raabe's creative work and there are, of course, obvious connections between them: any honest examination of social values is bound to proceed not merely from a descriptive but also from a historical or developmental point of view; if it does not, then it must do less than justice to the strains and stresses of different origin present in most societies at most times, and even if this point is not conceded, it must be obvious that the depiction of a society totally devoid of the stress

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4 Fairley, op.cit., p.51. Compare Prof. J.M. Ritchie's comment on the realist movement as a whole: "...always at the heart of their work there was the elegiac, almost sentimental awareness of time, for essentially they were concerned, not to record reality as they saw it, but to preserve the ideal image of the old world before it disappeared for ever." (Ritchie: "The ambivalence of 'Realism'...", p.217).

inherent in the challenge of transition would be so featureless as virtually to exclude any successful literary representation.<sup>5</sup> By the same token, a serious, creative approach to the subject of transience cannot avoid calling in question certain standards and assumptions in its endeavour to establish what is lasting in terms of moral and social values, and what is merely ephemeral. There are, then, significant, indeed one might say inevitable links between the two areas of concern which I have outlined, but this in itself does not bring us quite to the heart of the matter. In order to reach that stage, we have now to return to the questions I posed earlier and ask ourselves whether, in the light of what we have seen, any recognisable patterns emerge concerning Raabe's treatment of the topics discussed in the foregoing Chapters.

As far as I can see, two basic strands, themselves intertwined to some degree, can be isolated. In the first place, Raabe seems to regard all the modes of behaviour discussed above, to some extent at least, as failures of responsibility, as escapes, as, in some ways, responses of weakness to the challenges of life and the outside world: to take one example, the social conformism which we looked at

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5 Perhaps this is one reason why a work such as Freytag's Soll und Haben, which reflected so faithfully and unquestioningly the social and cultural values of its age, and which, by virtue of the positive light in which it portrayed them, was so outstandingly popular with the middle classes of the 1850s and 1860s, should subsequently have fallen so rapidly to a position of utter neglect. The flattering mirror-image so avidly affirmed by the generation it was written for, the people who saw themselves in it and could bask in a feeling of confirmed importance, proved flat and insipid to later generations who could not bring the same eager identification to it. I am grateful to Prof. Edward McInnes for drawing my attention to H. Steinecke's recently published book: Theorie und Kritik des Romans im neunzehnten Jahrhundert (Stuttgart, 1975), where the same point is made.

*Romantheorie und  
Romankritik in  
Deutschland.*



first of all not only disregards the number and variety of different possible perspectives, and the claims of the imagination, but also involves a retreat from personal responsibility and decision; similarly, the escape into fantasy, in its essentially solipsistic attitude to other people and society at large, entails a deliberate flight from all external pressure; again, the idealisation of the past, denying as it does the inevitability of change and the reality of present circumstances, represents an evasion of immediate responsibility; and finally, the reduction of life to one simplified slogan, principle or even ideal implies a withdrawal from the wearying subtleties and complexities of the world as it really is. In one sense or another there is an undeniable element of escape in each of these approaches to life, an element which Raabe is at pains to emphasise in the works in which they appear. Does that therefore mean that the prevailing atmosphere in these works is grimly censorious, with the author inviting the reader to sit in pitiless judgment on the characters he has chosen to portray in so unrelenting a fashion? I do not think that any serious student of Raabe could take such a view; the tone of the majority of his works is quite different from the one I have just suggested, and the reason for this is to be found in the second strand underlying his mature creativity, which to some degree exercises a moderating influence on the first.

This second fundamental factor, already implied in what I had to say regarding Raabe's main areas of interest, is a general respect for balance and moderation. As I have indicated here and there, this plays an important role in all four areas of concern discussed earlier (though most explicitly, of course, in the escape into

extremism), not only in terms of the interrelationship of individual characters but also of the over-all intention and execution of complete novels. Thus we have seen that although Raabe's attitude to society and social values is often clearly critical, there remains nevertheless an element of moderation, even hesitation, at the centre of it,<sup>6</sup> and Professor J. M. Ritchie's comment that:

Most of the nineteenth-century Realists were B ü r g e r born into the narrow world of provincial philistinism which they portray in their works with a mixture of love and rejection."<sup>7</sup>

illustrates the essentially undecided nature of Raabe's attitude to society. Similarly, as I tried to show in Chapter II, 2, his treatment of the imaginative outsider is highly ambivalent, and the tensions which arise between the outsider and the social group remain - in most of Raabe's mature works, at any rate - ultimately unresolved.<sup>8</sup> In the same way, though rather surprisingly in the context, Fritz Langreuter of Alte Nester (1879), despite his unashamed flights into the false comfort of an idealised past, is not condemned absolutely, and even the world of Altershausen, though an essentially negative concept in terms of this argument, does have attaching to it just enough allusions of a positive nature to allow for a different point of view.<sup>9</sup> In the light of this it is, I think, highly significant that of all the modes of behaviour discussed in the foregoing Chapters, the only one which Raabe presents in an

6 See Chapter II, 1, especially pp.35-39 and 66-68.

7 J. M. Ritchie: "Realism" in Periods in German Literature, vol. 1, London, 1968, p.181.

8 See Chapter II, 2, especially pp.119-22 and 133-40.

9 See Chapter II, 3, especially p.189.



unrelentingly negative fashion is the escape into extremism: during the period at issue, Hahnenberg appears in a totally uncomplimentary light, and although Velten Andres does exhibit highly effective intuitive powers in some directions, his attitude to Helene Trotzendorff - the only really important relationship in this respect - is shown in the last analysis to be misguided, despite all its potential creative force.<sup>10</sup> Thus Raabe's respect for balance and moderation emerges both implicitly and explicitly as a pivotal factor not only in his personal system of values (where it can be further demonstrated by biographical data) but also in the creative expression of these values in his literary works.

A further illustration of Raabe's concern for balance and moderation, this time absolutely central to his whole purpose in writing, is to be found in a topic which I have touched upon at various points, and which I should now like to formulate rather more explicitly. It can be expressed in this question: are there ever occasions when it is better to harbour or foster certain illusions than to suffer or inflict certain truths? This is a question which exercised Raabe throughout his literary career, and in the answering of it in a positive sense, the harsh realism which I indicated above was attenuated and modified to a considerable degree. It seems to me that the source of the ambivalence and hesitations which so clearly characterise his whole approach to the modes of behaviour and attitudes discussed earlier lies primarily in this area. Even at a very early stage there is clear evidence that what we might call humanitarian considerations weigh very heavily with Raabe: the notion

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10 See Chapter II, 4, especially pp.238-48.

that in certain circumstances illusion might be preferable to truth is clearly enunciated in Die Kinder von Finkenrode (1858) in the admittedly sentimentalised scenes at the deathbed of Wallinger; in the much later and more successful Fabian und Sebastian (1881) a strikingly similar set of circumstances emerges, except that now the comforting illusion operates in two directions simultaneously; despite the presence of opposing forces, the same thought pervades the whole of Deutscher Adel (1877) and is also easily recognisable in Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895),<sup>11</sup> and it plays a lesser though still significant part in other works, notably Abu Telfan (1867) (in Hagebucher's reflections on the character and fate of Thübrich), Der Schüdderump (1869) (in the narrator's comments on the situation of von Glaubigern), Holunderblüte (1863) (in the narrator's deliberate maintenance of an originally innocent misunderstanding), Pfisters Mühle (1884) (in Adam Asche's admiration and defence of „die Kunst, die Dinge in der Welt schönzufärben“) and Stopfkuchen (1889) (in Schaumann's essentially fraudulent but undeniably justifiable "rehabilitation" of Quakatz; here a link is clearly suggested between Schaumann's superior psychological insight and his resort to well-meaning deception);<sup>12</sup> and in the delightfully ironic Prinzessin Fisch (1882) the thought is carried a stage further - the reader is constantly led to recognise that certain kinds of illusion

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11 See Chapter II, 2, especially pp.129-33 and 136-37. In this connection, Klieneberger is certainly accurate in his description of Deutscher Adel (1877) as a "defence of illusion as a beneficent power in human life." (Klieneberger, op.cit., p.109).

12 cf. B.A. 7/146, 8/172, 9/1/91-92 and 119, 16/23-24 and 18/148-49 and 169 respectively.



may be desirable even in the long term; by coming through and outliving his adolescent fantasies concerning Romana, Theodor Rodburg acquires a stronger hold on reality than he otherwise could have done. In each of these novels we are made aware, in varying degree, of the feeling, to which Byron had given expression several decades previously, that

Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most  
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,  
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.

There is, I think, little doubt that we are dealing here with a deeply entrenched attitude which finds repeated expression throughout Raabe's work, an attitude which exercises a moderating, qualifying influence on the tone and atmosphere even of novels which seem to be heading in quite a different direction. It is, in fact, not simply an illustration of Raabe's respect for balance and moderation, but its very source.

Does this mean, then, that Raabe himself is essentially escapist, that he, as it were, condones any and every attempt to avoid the difficulties and problems of real life? I think that two considerations belie such a point of view. In the first place it has to be remembered that although the idea of humanitarian illusion, if I may use that term, is important, indeed essential to a full understanding of Raabe's achievement, it is only part of the picture. As I have tried to indicate in the foregoing Chapters, Raabe is pre-eminently interested in questions of reality and perception, and sees as a large part of his task the delineation of various factors which conspire to inhibit the full development of the individual's personality and consequently to distort his image of himself, other people and the world at large. This essentially disillusioning

function is only qualified by the introduction of humanitarian considerations; it is not thereby annulled. Secondly, it seems to me that Raabe's humanitarian concern with the possible effect which certain truths might have in some circumstances qualifies him in one particular sense for the title of a realist: it is, I believe, evidence that he has successfully recreated the essence of the real world, where people do on occasions find it helpful, even necessary, not to pry too deeply into the basis of a particular relationship, where an individual's peace of mind is now and again dependent upon a temporary retreat from the realisation of an unpleasant situation and where, for these essentially pragmatic reasons, it is sometimes better that the objective truth should not be clearly expressed or fully recognised. I do not think that it is going too far to suggest that in employing the concept of humanitarian illusion in this way Raabe is, in fact, coming closer to the reality of life, with all its weaknesses and compromises, than would have been possible if he had ignored it. A world of ethical supermen might well have been morally more invigorating (or possibly, by virtue of its unattainability in the real world, enfeebling!), but it could not have been as genuine and convincing as the authentically imperfect world which Raabe offers us. In this aspect of Raabe's work we can establish a link, tenuous perhaps, but nevertheless valid, between what from another point of view might have been regarded as the mutually exclusive areas of reality and illusion.

It is through this perhaps surprising coalescence of supposed opposites that I think the over-all pattern of Raabe's preoccupation with illusion and illusory values is best established. Throughout his work we are aware of a constant tension between, on the one hand,





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the desire to expose falsehood and error and, on the other, the feeling that in certain circumstances some degree of illusion or self-deception has to be tolerated. Either within an individual novel or as between one work and another we are confronted with the repeated delineation of two strands which seem at first sight to lead in opposite directions but which later are seen to intertwine to some extent without, however, finally joining together to form a unitary fibre. The two forces dominating his entire creative work - the principle of truth and the principle of humanity, which are, unfortunately, not always fully compatible - co-exist in an uneasy relationship from the first page of the Chronik der Sperlingsgasse (1855) to the last paragraph of Altershausen (1902); although the relative weight accorded to either is subject to continual variation, Raabe never reaches the point where he is able finally to affirm one and reject the other.<sup>13</sup> It seems to me that the reason for this lies in the fact that they each represent different aspects of his own personality, neither of which he could reject without being in some way untrue to himself, and I think most people familiar with his work will agree that the tension resulting from this sometimes

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13 cf. Goetz-Stankiewicz: "The Tailor and the Sweeper..." where two such characteristics are isolated and examined. (See pp.8-10, of this study). Despite some disagreements of emphasis, notably with regard to her analysis of the function of the "sweeper" and to the implications of the final phrase of the penultimate quotation, I feel that Mrs. Stankiewicz's study is a useful one, in that it establishes an important pattern. By virtue of the form of her argument, however, the reader gains the impression of an alternation of two principles within Raabe's work (that is to say, it is as if he gave prominence to the viewpoint of the "tailor" in one work and the "sweeper" in the next) rather than of a constant and delicately balanced tension between them. In the circumstances I think this is bound to distort the over-all picture somewhat.



painful dualism was, in literary terms, a fruitful one.<sup>14</sup>

How, then, can Raabe's approach to the whole area of human illusion and misunderstanding be summarised? I suggest that it is

14. While I have no wish to interpret Raabe's works on a biographical basis, I feel that the source of this tension (which is nevertheless independently evident in the works themselves) can be properly traced to a general inability on the part of Raabe himself to choose between the principle of truth and the principle of humanity. In the end, the ambivalence so obvious in his creative work is a reflection of his own honest indecision. This view is supported by a comparison of a few of his letters, some of which point in one direction, others in another. On the one hand, Raabe sometimes seems to have set himself a task of social enlightenment, as he implies in this letter of 1866, written while he was engaged on Abu Telfan: "So putze ich denn meine epische Rüstung und gedenke als deutschen Sitten-Schilderer noch einen guten Kampf zu kämpfen. Es ist so viel Lüge in unserer Litteratur, und ich werde auch für mein armes Theil nach Kräften das Meinige dazu tun, sie herauszubringen, obgleich ich recht gut weiß, daß meine Lebensbehaglichkeit dabei nicht gewinnen wird." (Letter of February, 1866 to Adolf Glaser, B.A. Ergänzungsband 2, p.112). Similarly he writes on 2nd March, 1875 to Paul Heyse: "Verehrtester, Sie können keine Ahnung davon haben, wie viele Sottisen mir täglich gesagt werden über das, worin ich doch mein innerstes Leben u Wirken fühle. Ich habe den alten romantischen Schlachtruf: "Krieg d. Philistern!" sehr ernst genommen, und deßhalb würde es Vielen eine Erleichterung u Genugthuung sein, wenn sie mich auf das itzo so wohl kultivierte Feld der Kulturhistorie treiben könnten: Der Schnitzelmann aus Nürnberg/Hat feil in seiner Buden, - wie es in dem Kinderliede heißt." (ibid, p.183). At other times, normally, it must be admitted, in later years, he seems to take quite a different view. Compare, for example, this letter of 31st March, 1891 to Karl von Bruyk: "Wenn ich durch meine Schreiberei dazu beigetragen habe, Ihnen dann und wann ein wenig Sonnenschein in einen grauen Lebensregentag leuchten zu lassen, so brauchen Sie mir nicht zu danken: ich hatte mir das nur von meinem schriftstellerischen Anfang an so vorgenommen." (ibid, p.295); most significant is this apparently paradoxical passage from a letter of 27th October, 1902 to Edmund Sträter: "...wir wollen zufrieden sein, wenn wir ein wenig mitgeholfen haben, dem deutschen Volke durch die zweite Hälfte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts durch, den Deckel vom Topfe gethan und ihm den Humor aufrecht erhalten zu haben." (ibid, p.442). Here the two concepts seem to be juxtaposed, not only in the letter but also in Raabe's mind, without any suggestion of contradiction. In personal as well as literary terms Raabe's whole life is a reflection of the dualism between the will to expose and the need to conceal.

characterised by the successive resolution of several series of contrasts at different levels until ultimately the apparently disparate elements are welded into a more or less harmonious whole: on one level his attention shifts from marked interest in social and cultural issues to an equally strong fascination with the imaginative, the eccentric and the idiosyncratic, and from concern with the disproportionate power of the past in the present to an examination of the constricting consequences of an exaggerated singlemindedness; on a higher level, at which various factors common to these apparently diverse phenomena can be shown to unite them under a few unifying headings, we are once again faced with what seems to be a fundamental contrast, this time between the stern clearsightedness with which Raabe establishes the essential escapism of the attitudes I have just mentioned, and the pragmatic humanity which at the same time he brings to bear on them; finally, however, this contrast too is at least partially resolved with the realisation that what Raabe is offering us is an oblique illustration of the age-old truth that from the human standpoint there are and always will be different ways of looking at the same thing - the revelatory and humanitarian principles both have a valid role to play, but neither can or should assert itself as the sole principle directing our approach to questions concerned with the nature of the world and the human situation; only in a synthesis of the two, in the constant sustaining of an attitude of openmindedness can there lie any hope of attaining the comprehensive balance necessary to the establishment of a multi-dimensional picture which does justice to the wholeness of life. In none of the works we have looked at up to this point has Raabe gone so far as to suggest that such a thing



is in fact possible, and so we have now to ask: did Raabe ever move beyond these exploratory searchings to create a convincing character or group of characters able to do justice to the complexities of life and to overcome the limitations and pitfalls which seem to have preoccupied him so much, and if so, what implications are involved for the interpretation of his work as a whole? It is to these questions above all that I should now like to turn in the following Chapter.

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SECTION THREE - „STOPFKUCHEN" AND THE SEARCH FOR THE SYNTHESIS

The question I posed at the end of the previous Chapter - whether Raabe ever portrayed convincingly a character or group of characters who succeeded in overcoming the pitfalls and misunderstandings which seem to have occupied such a large part of his view of the world - has exercised scholars and critics for over a century, and although at first sight it might seem a straightforward matter capable of clear demonstration one way or the other, the fact remains that the answers at which various students of Raabe have arrived are characterised not by any general consensus of opinion but rather by their high degree of diversity and disagreement. To some extent this can be ascribed simply to changes in critical fashion; it can be shown, for example, that, generally speaking, earlier critics have tended to take a charitable, even positively benign view of a large number of Raabe's characters and have endeavoured to establish many of them as exemplary figures, created by Raabe as embodiments of whatever message he might be attempting to convey, while more recent generations have generally fostered a greater awareness of the distance which Raabe put between himself and most of his characters and have detected a prevailing tone of stern realism, and often of irony, where exaggeratedly positive characters are felt to be out of



place.<sup>1</sup> Another factor making for diversity of opinion is undoubtedly the nature of the question itself, for it is essentially an amalgam of two separate issues: it is not enough to isolate certain occasions where Raabe seems to have intended to present a character or group of characters in a particularly positive fashion (for that would be a simple enough procedure in most cases); we have to go on from there and attempt to assess whether the presentation is effective, whether we can believe at least in the poetic reality of the character and of his situation as they are presented to us. It is at this stage (which many of the earlier critics seem to leave out of account entirely) that disagreement can most easily arise, for the

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1 Such a clear distinction cannot, of course, be applied in every case; the general change of attitude which has taken place has developed only gradually, and many critics can be placed between the two poles. Typical expressions of the opposed standpoints are, however, found above all in critics such as Wilhelm Fehse, so to speak an archetypal representative of the traditional view, and Hermann Helmers, the arch-demolisher of that view, especially in the 1960s. With Fehse, enthusiastic, idealising formulations such as the following occur repeatedly: op.cit., p.290 (speaking of Frau Klaudine and her followers in Abu Telfan 1867): "....weil sie es verlernt haben, die Dinge dieser Welt im trügerischen Glanze der Sehnsucht zu sehen, sind sie gefeit vor jeder Niederlage"; p.343 (speaking of the conclusion to Der Schüdderump, 1869): "Trotz ihrer Wehrlosigkeit den Angriffen der Gewöhnlichkeit gegenüber geht Antonie ihren wehvollen Weg in dem klaren Bewußtsein ihrer Unüberwindlichkeit. ... So endet das ernste Buch vom „Schüdderump“ dennoch mit dem Triumph des Lichtes"; p.360: "In Des Reiches Krone überwindet Raabe sein Golgotha und erreicht mit dem klaglosen Sieg über den grimmigsten Erdenjammer jene Höhe des Menschentums, über die es kein Hinaus mehr gibt." Over against this, Helmers operates with chilling conciseness and sobriety: "Der Raabe des Jahres 1968 ist ein unsentimentaler Rationalist, ein zweifelnder Spötter, ein mutiger Streiter, ein humanitärer Politiker, ein wahrhaftiger Poet, ein scharfer Kritiker." (Helmers: Wilhelm Raabe, p.v.). As I maintain elsewhere in this study (see Appendix A, pp.372-75). I feel that both Fehse and Helmers offer an exaggeratedly one-sided picture of Raabe. Their views are mentioned here simply as illustrations of the extent of disagreement among students of Raabe on the question in hand.

second part of the question calls not only for factual demonstration but also for a subjective response; we have to deal not only with the author's probable intention but also with the quality of its execution and the conviction with which he is able to invest it.

My own view of the matter is that, within the terms of this study, there are very few occasions where the creation of a convincing positive character is even arguable. We can, it is true, point to certain figures, especially from Raabe's earlier work, whom the author appears to have conceived in an exceptionally favourable, even idealised light, but it seems to me that most if not all of these examples must appear less than convincing when viewed at all dispassionately. No doubt Raabe felt, or at least hoped, that in the creation of Hans Unwirrsch, for example (Der Hungerpastor, 1863) he had presented a figure whose moral standing and strength of character would evoke a powerful emotional - and ultimately ethical - reaction in the reader, and judging by the book's popularity over many years, this hope was abundantly fulfilled in some quarters, but it must be said that the progress of the hero from a childhood of unrelieved but dignified poverty through the trials of school and university to the final attainment of his life's ambition - all without the least trace of any serious inner conflict or questioning - is intolerably stereotyped, especially when set against the equally conventional figure of the unscrupulous Jew, Moses Freudenstein. In this case at least, Raabe's intentions are vitiated by his inability to lend them sufficient conviction. Similarly, in the figure of Friedrich Winkler (Drei Federn, 1865), Raabe may well have been attempting to introduce a character of exemplary human qualities in order to



motivate more effectively August Sonntag's break with Hahnenberg, but here too the characterisation and situation are irretrievably stereotyped - we are asked to accept not only the facile equation of the musician with the man of wisdom but also the hackneyed paradox of the blind man as a seer, a temptingly obvious cliché to which Raabe succumbed on at least two occasions.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this the figure of Winkler loses all of its distinction and much of its credibility in the eyes of the reader, and the novel as a whole suffers in consequence. Once again, Raabe's intentions point towards the creation of a strongly positive figure, but his characterisation proves inadequate to the task he set himself. Even in the case of Klaudine Fehleysen (Abu Telfan, 1867), for whom certain critics seem to have had considerable admiration,<sup>3</sup> it is impossible to speak of a convincing positive character. Although much of the novel is centred round her isolated cottage, she leaves a rather shadowy impression, more like an enervated, unreliable oracle than a

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2 Raabe's use of this cliché is particularly blatant in the figure of the blind Eugenie Leiding (Ein Frühling, 1857). Compare, for example, this passage, where Eugenie is shown to be the only person aware of what Dr. Hagen is actually talking about: „I c h sehe! ich sehe!“ flüsterte Eugenie so leise, daß nur der Arzt es vernahm. „O, mein Gott, ich sehe!“ Ein unendlicher Schmerz lag in ihrer Stimme, und krampfhaft drückte sie Klärchen, die ihr Köpfchen an ihrem Busen verbarg, an sich.“ (B.A. 1/297) Throughout the book the contrast, or perhaps one should say the link between her blindness and her intuitive wisdom, is repeatedly emphasised. A similar though not nearly so jarring example is found in the much later figure of Thekla Overhaus (Das Horn von Wanza, 1880).

3 cf. Fehse's comment, quoted in Note 1, and Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel (Sintflut und Arche. Biblische Motive bei Wilhelm Raabe, Wuppertal, 1967, pp.47-48): „Während Frau Claudine im Abu Telfan eine mystische Ruhe des ‚Nichts-mehr-wollen‘ verkörpert und darin daseinsordnend für die Menschen wird, ....“

true human being of flesh and blood, and she certainly seems unable to offer Leonhard Hagebucher any viable alternative to ultimate reintegration into the inadequate society they have both rejected.<sup>4</sup> If she holds any interest for Raabe's work as a whole, it is not on her own account but by virtue of the similarities which can be observed between her and more successfully conceived characters in later works. Here we have, in fact, an illustration of Raabe's artistic obsessiveness: the same theme or themes can be traced all through the different stages of his development, but it is only in the later works that he is able to give them fully effective expression. Thus it is to these later works that we have to turn in order to do justice to both aspects of our original question; it is only there that the necessary combination of thematic intention and formal mastery is possible.

Within the corpus of his later work, Raabe seems to have returned with a new energy and intensity to the possibility of creating a convincing ideal hero. Within the space of six years we find three substantial novels where it is at least arguable that the central figure can and should be regarded in an almost entirely positive light, that is to say, where he or she is accepted as someone whose perception of his own situation and whose understanding of the world about him are generally clear and accurate, and who is,

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4 It seems to me in any case that Raabe did not want Frau Kläudine to be seen in any way as an idealised or exemplary character. As I suggested earlier (see Chapter II, 1 of this study, pp. 42-43 and Note 28), he intended her solution to be regarded as a very restricted, personal escape with no practical applicability in other circumstances; and even this view, it could be argued, errs on the positive side. I do not think he ever intended to set her up as a woman of wisdom able to restore the fortunes of others by example and exhortation.



consequently, able to come to terms with life in a way which the majority of people finds impossible to emulate. The three novels in question are Unruhige Gäste (1884), Das Odfeld (1887) and Stopfkuchen (1889). During this period, Raabe wrote only two other works: Im alten Eisen (1886) with its uncharacteristically outspoken social comment falls between Unruhige Gäste and Das Odfeld, while the more typical but nevertheless quite distinctive novel Der Lar (1888) forms, as it were, a wedge between Das Odfeld and Stopfkuchen, and the contrast which these two works offer, both in terms of subject-matter and of presentation serves to highlight further the similarities which characterise the other three. It is as if, in similar fashion to his intense preoccupation with the question of the imaginative outsider a decade earlier, Raabe were now determined to face up fully and finally to the problem of creating a convincing ideal hero and to overcome it once and for all. Whether or not he succeeded in this is, of course, a question of fundamental importance whose implications stretch out beyond the individual works at issue to encompass major aspects of Raabe's view of life and of his literary accomplishment during the most valuable period of his creativity.

In spite of their complete dissimilarity as far as details of plot and milieu are concerned, Unruhige Gäste, Das Odfeld and Stopfkuchen are bound together by at least three obviously common features: in each case we are confronted with a critical examination of social values based on the relationship between a socially insignificant, sometimes isolated central figure and the wider community; in addition each of the works is characterised by a shift of emphasis away from the immediate sequence of events towards

considerations of a more general, indeed one might say universal application through the use of historical, biblical and mythological allusion (this is, for example, one of the functions of the repeated references in Stopfkuchen to the Seven Years' War, the study of palaeontology and Schaumann's motto „Gehe heraus aus dem Kasten“.); finally, in all three novels the reader's initial expectations are progressively undermined, and ultimately destroyed, by the author's use of a deliberate process of disillusioning (in which context the subtitles of Unruhige Gäste and Stopfkuchen, with their frankly misleading implications, assume additional significance; in one case at least, the expectations aroused by the phrase „Eine See-und Mordgeschichte“ were so alluring that a contemporary critic, having, as it seemed to him, been duped into reading a sub-standard detective story, felt constrained to voice his frustration in these terms: „Schade um den schönen Stoff, die Mordgeschichte, die man sich so mühsam aus dem Stopfkuchen heraussuchen muß, wie eine einzelne Rosine aus einem Napfkuchen.“)<sup>5</sup> These common features have for the most part been recognised by Raabe-critics for some time, and have been the subject of several detailed studies which it would be wasteful to duplicate at this stage.<sup>6</sup> I mention them

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5 Paul von Szczepanski, in his review of Stopfkuchen in Velhagen und Klasings Neue Monatshefte of March, 1891 (p.127), quoted by Karl Hoppe in the appendix to Stopfkuchen in volume 18 of the Braunschweiger Ausgabe. (B.A. 18/434)

6 Not all of the studies in question are devoted to a comparative examination of the three works in question, but they all deal with one or more of the features mentioned, whether with reference to one novel or to several. See, for example: Walter Killy: „Geschichte gegen die Geschichte...“, Volkmar Sander: „Illusionszerstörung und Wirklichkeitserfassung...“, Hermann Helmers: Die bildenden Mächte..., Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel: Sintflut und Arche..., Gertrud Höhler: Unruhige Gäste. Das Bibelzitat in Wilhelm Raabes Roman, Bonn, 1969, and Herman Meyer: Der Sonderling in der deutschen Dichtung. Edward Brill's introduction to the Clarendon edition of Unruhige Gäste (Oxford, 1964) also makes some important points with particular reference to that novel.



merely as evidence of a distinctive pattern which can be established in all three novels, one indeed, which would entitle us to use the term "trilogy" with at least as much justification as Hermann Helmers can claim for his application of that term to his much-discussed grouping together of Alte Nester (1879), Stopfkuchen (1889) and Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895).<sup>7</sup> Because of the close thematic and formal links between Unruhige Gäste (1884), Das Odfeld (1887) and Stopfkuchen, however, I feel that a separate examination of each in turn would involve an unnecessary and probably unacceptable degree of repetition, and for that reason I should prefer to deal primarily with Stopfkuchen, referring to the others by way of confirmation, contrast or qualification where this seems to be appropriate.

Stopfkuchen has long been rightly regarded as structurally one of Raabe's most complex and finely wrought narratives. As early as 1932 Romano Guardini devoted part of his now celebrated essay "Über Wilhelm Raabes Stopfkuchen." to a brief discussion of the interdependence of the various time levels and to an analysis of the techniques involved in bringing about the odd sensation of timelessness combined with progression which the novel imparted to

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7 Helmers defines his use of the term "trilogy" thus: "Drei durch Gestaltung, Struktur und Grundgeschehen verwandte Werke" and goes on to characterise each as "eine Variationsform innerhalb einer denkbaren Grundidee." (Helmers: Die bildenden Mächte..., p.56). I think that in general terms most of these requirements are covered by the grouping of Unruhige Gäste, Das Odfeld and Stopfkuchen.

him,<sup>8</sup> and in 1953 an almost equally influential article by Herman Meyer concentrated predominantly on the peculiarities of the narrative technique in Stopfkuchen (this occupies eighteen out of thirty-two pages in the reprint in Raabe in neuer Sicht) and established on the basis of that examination what has come to be recognised as perhaps the single most distinctive feature of Raabe's late writing: „weitgehendste Relativierung der tatsächlichen Vorgangselemente zugunsten des übertatsächlichen Sinngehalts.“<sup>9</sup> since that time more recent studies, notably by Barker Fairley, Hubert Ohl and Peter Detroy, have thrown further light both on the formal elements of the novel as such and on the motives which may have led Raabe to employ them.<sup>10</sup> Despite its narrative complexity, however, it is not difficult to isolate the major source of tension

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8 Romano Guardini: „Über Wilhelm Raabes Stopfkuchen.“, in Hochland, 10 (1932), pp.328-352, reprinted in Raabe in neuer Sicht, pp.12-43. In his discussion of the different time-levels, Guardini speaks of „eine eigentümliche Verdoppelung des Geschehens“ and suggests that „die Flüchtigkeit des Daseins empfängt in der Innigkeit des Gedenkens eine seltsame Hoffnung.“ (Raabe in neuer Sicht, p.13). At a later stage he describes the sense of timelessness and progression in these words: „Eigentlich, wenn man nur je zehn Seiten des Buches zusammennimmt, steckt immer schon das Ganze drin. Und wird doch immer neu aufgehoben, und immer ist es etwas anderes (p.34). The action of the novel is like „das Immer-Gleiche und das Immer-Neue im Wellengang des Meeres.“ (p.35).

9 Meyer: „Raum und Zeit in Wilhelm Raabes Erzählkunst.“ (in Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift, 27 (1953), pp.236-267, reprinted in Raabe in neuer Sicht, pp.98-129), p.118. Meyer's examination of Stopfkuchen covers pp.111-129.

10 Fairley: Wilhelm Raabe...; Ohl: „Eduards Heimkehr...“ and Bild und Wirklichkeit. Studien zur Romankunst Raabes und Fontanes. Heidelberg, 1968; Detroy: Der Humor als Gestaltungsprinzip im 'Stopfkuchen'. A further notable contribution to this field of enquiry is Günter Witschel's comparative study: Raabe-Integrationen... (quoted above).



at the centre of the novel: from start to finish our attention is directed forcefully towards the relationship between Heinrich Schaumann and the community into which he was born and from which he has become detached. On one level the tension inherent in this relationship is expressed in the conversations between Schaumann and Eduard during the latter's belated visit to the Rote Schanze (and in particular through Schaumann's reproaches concerning the tardiness of Eduard's arrival, and the guilty exasperation Eduard feels each time Schaumann reminds him of his omissions);<sup>11</sup> on another it is demonstrated through the reminiscences of childhood and youth shared by Eduard and Schaumann and through Schaumann's apparently unending narrative relating his "conquest" of the Rote Schanze; finally it is seen near the end of the novel in modified but immediate and direct fashion in the reaction of the townspeople to Schaumann's unexpected appearance and to the revelations he makes on that occasion. As the novel

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11 Schaumann reproaches Eduard explicitly on this particular subject on at least two occasions (B.A. 18/54, 72), and on the first occasion, Eduard accepts the justification behind the reproach. Much more frequent, however, are Schaumann's more general reproaches concerning Eduard's attitude to him as a child (cf., for example, B.A. 18/65-7, 82-3, 131). The regularity of these reproaches seems to me to constitute an objection to Moltmann-Wendel's suggestion that Schaumann is not interested in teaching Eduard and the townspeople a lesson but merely in rehabilitating the memory of Quakatz (Moltmann-Wendel, op.cit., pp.59-60). Over and above this, Moltmann-Wendel's suggestion is surely refuted by Schaumann's outright statement: "Und ich hoffe es dir im Laufe des Tages doch noch zu beweisen, daß auch die einsame Haustürtreppe, der unterste Platz in jeder Schulklasse, der tränenreiche Sitz am Wiesenrain den Menschen doch noch zu einem gewissen Überblick und einer Zweck und Ziel im Erdendasein gelangen lassen können. Zum Laufen hilft eben immer nicht, schnell sein', lieber Eduard" (B.A. 18/66-7), and by Eduard's final admission: "Die Menschheit hatte immer noch die Macht, sich aus dem Fett, der Ruhe, der Stille heraus dem sehnigsten, hageren, fahrigem Konquistadorentum gegenüber zur Geltung zu bringen. Heinrich Schaumann, genannt Stopfkuchen, hatte dieses mir gegenüber gründlich besorgt." (B.A. 18/204, my emphasis)

unfolds it becomes increasingly clear that in the context of this conflict relationship the author is encouraging us to look at Schaumann in a predominantly positive light: not only is the vast majority of significant past events related and interpreted for us more or less directly by Schaumann himself (for his "monologues" are of such a length that for long periods we imagine ourselves to be alone with him, becoming aware of Eduard's capacity as listener and narrator only when a reference by Schaumann or an interpolation by Eduard reminds us of the true situation); we are also encouraged to take his side in the conflict by the gradual change of view which Eduard, himself at least in part a representative of the local community's values, is seen to undergo, and by the obvious success of the psychological manipulation which Schaumann exercises on several occasions. What is there, then, in Schaumann's character and situation that causes Raabe to portray him so favourably? What distinguishes him from the other characters in Stopfkuchen and, indeed, from those we have been looking at in earlier Chapters? It seems to me that on one level at least, the answer lies in a combination of three separate but complementary factors, each of them well documented within the novel itself.

The first and possibly most obvious distinguishing factor has already been suggested: Schaumann's relationship to the local community has always been strained; from earliest childhood he has been made to feel different, inferior, even worthless, principally because of his obesity and physical lethargy. From the outset his situation is one of longing isolation, as Guardini remarks near the beginning of his study:

„.....ein Ausgeschlossener, outcast vom Sein her.



Einer, der nichts Besseres möchte, als im Leben mittun zu können wie alle, aber nicht kann. Im Grunde, weil er über den Andern steht."<sup>12</sup>

During the long years of scorn and humiliation at school - followed, oddly enough, both in view of Schaumann's apparent lack of receptivity and of the strongly autobiographical elements in the narrative, by a successful Abitur - he reacts with bitterness and a keen desire for personal revenge (the root of his original childhood desire to "conquer" the Rote Schanze);<sup>13</sup> and although by the time of Eduard's visit his attitude towards the townspeople has mellowed to one of superior contempt, the gap between them is little narrower than it had been a whole generation previously.<sup>14</sup> Schaumann may now have developed greater insight into the herd instincts of his philistine contemporaries (and thus into the sources of his original rejection by them), but this very awareness only serves to intensify his desire to live apart from them, while they themselves - partly, no doubt, because of the lack of any regular contact with their eccentric neighbour - have obviously very little idea either of his

<sup>12</sup> Guardini, op.cit., p.17.

<sup>13</sup> That the desire for personal revenge was a major factor - though not the only one - in his early ambition to "conquer" the Rote Schanze, is clear from his own comments, both contemporary and retrospective. Particularly characteristic is this outburst, shortly after he has been refused entry to the next class at school: „Quakatz auf der Roten Schanze hat ganz recht, wenn er am liebsten seinen Wall vom Prinzen Xaver her auch lieber mit Kanonen als bloß mit seinen Dornbüschen bespicken möchte gegen die ganze Welt, die ganze Menschheit. Hu, wenn ich mal von der Roten Schanze aus drunterpfeffern dürfte - unter die ganze Menschheit nämlich, und nachher noch die Hunde loslassen!“ (B.A. 18/27)

<sup>14</sup> In view of this, I feel that Witschel's description of Schaumann's attitude towards the townspeople as *lächelndes Mitgefühl* (Witschel, op.cit., p.43) tends to obscure the true situation, which is still essentially one of alienation, isolation and even hostility.

personality or of his intellectual capacity. (The universal amazement that he of all people should have solved the riddle of the Kienbaum murder, together with the congratulations offered to Eduard for his alleged success in wheedling this out of the taciturn Schaumann, is only one illustration of their nonchalant ignorance in this respect).<sup>15</sup> In this connection, Schaumann's almost hermit-like existence in the Rote Schanze is much more than simply a minor contributory factor to his lack of recognition in the community; it is a physical, geographical indication, crude and unsubtle perhaps, but nonetheless appropriate, of his life-long social and personal isolation. It is, further, not without significance, that the Rote Schanze, although only an indistinct blur when seen from the railway line, and at some considerable distance from the town itself, occupies a strategically important position high above the surrounding countryside and overlooking the town directly; its dominating situation gives its occupants an almost insuperable advantage over any attacker from below while at the same time allowing them to anticipate and therefore counter any move the enemy might choose to attempt. Schaumann's final superiority over the townspeople is of this order, although, characteristically, they are virtually unaware of the situation. (As several critics have observed, the same combination of physical isolation with personal and social misunderstanding also plays an

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15 See especially B.A. 18/202.



important role in Unruhige Gäste, 1884).<sup>16</sup>

Schaumann's relationship to the local community - and, by implication, the relationship of people such as him to society at large - is, then, distinguished above all by separation and distance. To a considerable degree his situation is one of physical and cultural isolation, but although, as I hope to show at a later stage, this is an important, even a crucial aspect of his characterisation, it is not of itself the decisively positive factor which Raabe wishes to emphasise through his concentration on Schaumann. Nor indeed should we expect it to be: it is certainly true that when we consider Raabe's attitude to social values as it emerges in Chapter II, 1 and in Appendix A of this study, we must gather the distinct impression that, as far as that aspect of his writing is concerned, he is interested above all in laying bare the inadequacies and shortcomings of too trusting a reliance on the standards and assumptions of society, that his attitude is predominantly a negative one. This is, I believe, an accurate summary as far as it goes, but it does not entitle us to make the further assumption that, simply because an exaggerated adherence to social values is portrayed in this way, a radical rejection of them must inevitably attract the author's full approval. Indeed, I have attempted to show at other points in this study - explicitly in

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16 In her impressively detailed study of Unruhige Gäste, Hühler makes this point at some length and concludes, speaking of the tourists' disgust that Fuchs' cottage has not somehow been removed entirely, thus: „Die Verkennung des einen Bereichs durch die Vertreter des entgegengesetzten ist uns schon bekannt als eine der verkennenden Seite auferlegte habituelle Geschiedenheit von bestimmten Lebenserscheinungen und-formen.“ (Hühler, p.218). This analysis could apply with almost equal force to the situation in Stopfkuchen.

Chapter II, 2 and implicitly in parts of Chapter II, 4 - that in the case of Raabe such a conclusion is unwarranted; the elusive ambivalence of his attitude to the imaginative outsider, and the agonised ambiguity with which he approaches the figure of Velten Andres are proof enough of that. The same pattern of balanced and qualified criticism also applies in Stopfkuchen: Schaumann's detachment from society does not in itself constitute a decisively positive element in his characterisation; it is, however, of considerable importance on another level, that is to say, by virtue of its relationship with the second factor through which he is distinguished from the other characters in the novel: his reflective and imaginative ability.

Of all Schaumann's major characteristics, this is undoubtedly the one he himself chooses to emphasise most. With the exception of numerous ironic references to his physical handicaps, no aspect of his personality is highlighted in his self-characterisation more sharply than his capacity for reflection and meditation. He loses no opportunity to remind Eduard - and, of course, the reader - of its fundamental importance, sometimes simply by an occasional casual reference but more often through the use of a particular motif; in this connection I am thinking above all of the persistently recurring image „unter der Hecke liegen" or its variant „unter der Hecke gelassen werden." This motif occurs, in one or other of these forms, at regular intervals in the course of the novel, from the beginning of Schaumann's "monologues" right up to the penultimate section of the narrative. Its primary and most immediately obvious purpose is to illustrate the extent of Schaumann's rejection by his contemporaries, and it is used both by Schaumann himself and by



Eduard in this context. Schaumann uses it on a number of occasions as the vehicle of a fleeting but nevertheless penetrating personal reproach to Eduard, of which the following is a typical example:

„Den biedern Buren Klaas Baster wirst du wahrscheinlich allmählich auch gefunden haben und ihn in sentimental afrikanischen Stimmungen an den Busen schließen; aber den biedern Heinrich Schaumann hast du jenerzeit auch nicht gefunden, sondern ihn nur mit den übrigen von uns als Stopfkuchen unter der Hecke belassen. Verzeihe die Abschweifung...." (B.A. 18/116)

(Here, Schaumann's coolly ironic reference to what is really his central preoccupation, as a "digression", is a doubly wounding reproach).<sup>17</sup> More frequently he uses it as an illustration of the loneliness which he had suffered as a child, contrasting his own enforced sedentary isolation with the spring-heeled camaraderie of the others:

„Ihr hattet mich mal wieder allein unter der Hecke sitzen lassen, ihr andern, und waret eurem Vergnügen an der Welt ohne mich nachgelaufen.“  
(B.A. 18/82)

(Here the bitter frustration of childhood loneliness is suggested in particularly poignant fashion in the words „mal wieder allein ... sitzen."); an additional note of superior irony is struck in this contrasting example where Schaumann, declining Staatsanwalt Schellbaum's invitation to stay for the rest of the evening in the inn, comments:

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17 Compare also this very similar passage from the following section of the novel, where Schaumann makes Eduard's position clear to Tintchen: „Ich glaube, ich habe es dir schon bemerkt, Schatz, daß wir heute eben auch nicht mit anderen Leuten, sondern mit einem von uns zu tun haben. Dieser hier zeigte doch schon in seiner Kindheit Mitgefühl und ging als der letzte, wenn die anderen mich unter der Hecke liegen ließen.“ (B.A. 18/124). The back-handed compliment serving as a reproach is typical of Schaumann's uninhibitedly superior attitude towards Eduard.

„Wie gerne, wenn es ginge und mein Leibarzt es mir nicht untersagt hätte. ... Ach, wenn Sie nur eine Ahnung davon hätten, Schellbaum, wie streng mir der Mensch, der Oberwasser, geistige Aufregung jeder Art untersagt hat, Sie ließen mich wie in andern, schönern Zeiten ruhig unter meiner Hecke.“ (B.A. 18/194)

(The particular irony of this statement lies, of course, in Schaumann's superior realisation that Schellbaum, with his sentimentalised recollections of a happy, uncomplicated childhood, is innocently unaware that Schaumann's memories are generally rather less pleasant).

The motif of „unter der Hecke liegen“ is, then, well established in the narrative as an illustration of Schaumann's social isolation. Its application is not, however, confined to that area. Just as important in its own way is its application to the development of his individual latent characteristics: here it is used, as I hinted above, to highlight his particular qualities of reflection and meditation. One of the earliest occasions on which it is used for this purpose occurs when Schaumann, pointing out some of the changes he has made on the farm, tells Eduard that he has ensured that the outdoor seats are positioned in such a way that they are sheltered from the immediate glare of the sun. He then continues: „Wie du gleichfalls bemerkst, Eduard, bin ich auch hier immer unter der Hecke geblieben.“ (B.A. 18/122) Although the hint of childhood isolation is not entirely absent here, the primary emphasis surely lies in the fact that the cool shade Schaumann has thus created for himself allows him to sit for long periods in uninterrupted tranquillity and thus to reflect deeply and at length on questions of basic importance; it allows his thoughts to come to full maturity in a way that they could not if



he were constantly disturbed by extraneous factors such as the constantly shifting angle of the sun; and in this particular passage there is more than just the hint of a parallel with the cool calm of the cloistered life, and all the associations with the achievement of wisdom through meditation which that recalls. (Here we have also a typical example of what we might call the multi-purpose motif in Stopfkuchen; although the primary emphasis in this case concerns Schaumann, there is in addition a secondary reflection on Eduard, who shows a surprisingly comprehensive misunderstanding of Schaumann's allusion when he comments: „Dem war so. Die vier Bänke auf den vier Ecken der Roten Schanze hatten alle ein schattig Gebüsch hinter sich, und man konnte sich wohl auf ihnen in die Lust der Jugend, unter der Hecke zu liegen, - zurückträumen.“ (B.A. 18/122) That Schaumann was not at all day-dreaming, far less day-dreaming about his childhood miseries - or pleasures, as Eduard assumes - is, I hope, clear from the argument I suggested earlier). Similar examples demonstrating the use of this motif as an illustration of Schaumann's reflective capacities occur at several points in the narrative;<sup>18</sup> it would serve no useful purpose to deal with them all at this stage, but I should like to return briefly to two occasions where the double-edged nature of the motif is particularly clear, this time in a more concentrated fashion than in the example I have just quoted. The first occurs roughly two-thirds of the way through the narrative, where Schaumann turns to his wife and says:

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18 Compare also these passages: „Du weißt, Eduard, daß ich unter meiner Hecke allerlei durcheinander zusammenlas.“ and: „....Unter der Hecke noch hatte ich mir schon als Junge fest vorgenommen, nur bei Ähnlichen oder vielmehr nur bei gleichen Kesseln, Pfannen, Töpfen und Bratenwendern auch einmal ein Mädchen glücklich zu machen.“ (B.A. 18/142)

„Da ist es denn aber für dich gleich ein wahres Glück, Tinnen, daß mich der Bursche hier schon auf Schulen da unten in dem Neste im Tal nicht für den Gerichtsstuhl, das Katheder, die Kanzel und das Reichstagsmandat, sondern für die Rote Schanze hat miterziehen helfen, indem auch er mich unter der Hecke hat liegen lassen, meiner schwachen Füße wegen.“ (B.A. 18/130-31)

And similarly, in response to Eduard's outburst of astonishment at his having sat down to reflect after his suspicions concerning Störzer had been aroused, instead of having taken immediate action or confided in someone, he says, himself apparently taken aback at Eduard's surprise:

„Was sollte ich denn anders tun? Auf was anderes ist denn ein Mensch angewiesen, den man unter der Hecke hat liegenlassen?“ (B.A. 18/176)

In both instances, Raabe obviously intends to make the reader clearly aware of the connection between Schaumann's social isolation and the evolvement of his contemplative faculties.<sup>19</sup> That is not to say that his isolation as a child is to be seen as the sole source of his reflective capacities, for he seems to have been of meditative rather than active disposition from the beginning; it does, however, serve undeniably as a forceful catalyst in their development; although they are to some degree the product of inborn characteristics, they would not, it is suggested, have evolved to the extent they do but for the social ostracism which forced Schaumann to seek his own company as a youth. The links between

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19 A very explicit illustration of this intention is found when Eduard, thinking over the significance of his visit to the Rote Schanze, comments thus: „Wenn ich ihn (Schaumann) je in vergangenen Jahren, wie er sich ausdrückte, unter seiner Hecke seinen Gedanken, Gefühlen, Stimmungen, kurz, sich selber allein als eigenster Austrägalinstanz anbefohlen hatte, so zahlte er mir das heute mit tausendfachen Zinsen zurück und ließ mich ihm nachgucken in die Nacht hinein, wie selten einem Menschen nachgesehen worden ist.“ (B.A. 18/196)



his childhood isolation and his highly developed reflective capacities are, then, causal in the sense I have just indicated, and I shall return to some of the implications of this relationship at a later stage.

It may seem that I have spent rather a long time in establishing the significance of Schaumann's contemplative faculties, but they do, after all, occupy a key position in the characterisation of the central figure in the novel. Indeed, their importance is indicated by Raabe not only through motifs such as „unter der Hecke liegen" but in a variety of other ways: Eduard, for example, finally comes to realise their importance for Schaumann's personal happiness, and there is, of course, also the question of the name Raabe chose for his central figure; Herman Meyer is surely correct in his suggestion that the name Schaumann can properly be broken up into two parts (Schau-Mann) and used as an aid to the interpretation of the author's intentions. His own comment: „Heinrich Schaumann ist der schauende, und auch der beschauliche Mensch",<sup>20</sup> emphasising as it does the importance of this aspect of Schaumann's personality, is one which merits full and ready acceptance, the more so as Raabe's practice in using suggestive names was well established long before

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20 Meyer: Sonderling...., p.278.

the writing of Stopfkuchen (1889).<sup>21</sup>

The importance of Schaumann's deliberative and reflective capacities is, then, undeniable, and there is no doubt that to a considerable degree it is this quality which sets him apart, in terms of perceptive achievement, from his contemporaries in the local community. The independence of thought which he derives from it and the slow maturing and steady accumulation of insight and wisdom which it affords are beyond the reach of his philistine neighbours who, as we can infer both from their relationship to Schaumann himself and from their reactions to the revelations he finally chooses to make, are content for the most part to form immediate judgments on particular situations on the basis of a corpus of generally accepted social standards, some of them valuable, but others tendentious and crippling.<sup>22</sup> This is, not,

21 The use of suggestive names as a means of characterisation is a practice which Raabe maintained throughout his literary career and which, no doubt, is one reason for his having been compared so frequently by contemporary critics to Dickens (though in his article on Raabe and Dickens, Klieneberger makes no mention of this stylistic similarity). It is found as early as Ein Frühling (1857), in the figures of Aurelie Süßmilch and Laurentia Sauer, and continues through Nach dem großen Kriege, 1861 (with Fritz Wolkenjäger), and Drei Federn, 1865 (with August Hahnenberg) right through to the mature works of his old age, Die Akten des Vogelsangs, 1895 (with Velten Andres) and Altershausen, 1902 (with Fritz Feyerabend). On some occasions the name is clearly meant to be taken ironically as, for example, in the case of the poet Krautworst (Keltische Knochen, 1864) and of the central characters of Vom alten Proteus (1875), Vater Konstantius, Hilarion Abwarter and Ernesta Piepenschnieder. In the case of Schaumann, the name is obviously intended to be taken at face value.

22 The unquestioning adherence to values accepted in the local community and handed down from generation to generation is a basic aspect of Raabe's depiction of the socially conformist approach to life. The stock responses which it generates have been examined earlier in this study, with particular reference to the portrayal of the villagers of Bumsdorf and Nippenburg in Abu Telfan (1867) and of Karl Krumhardt's wife and father in Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895). (See Chapter II, 1 of this study).



however, the only major distinguishing factor in his characterisation. Just as important in its own way is the humanity he brings to bear on his relationships with other people, and in particular with Quakatz, Tinchén and Störzer.

In common with his intellectual and deliberative capacities, Schaumann's qualities of compassion go generally unrecognised by the local community, not surprisingly, perhaps in view of the gulf that has always existed between them. What is more, they do not really enter into his "monologues" with Eduard, but are brought to our notice in the first instance by Tinchén, who seems still to retain some of the surprise and bewilderment which had overcome her when Schaumann, as a schoolboy, first showed himself willing to treat her and her father not as common criminals but as normal decent people; and here too she seems to suggest a connection between Schaumann's detachment from society and his personally distinguishing qualities:

„Wenn einer damals nicht zu den andern gehörte, Herr Eduard, so war das mein Mann. Nicht etwa, weil er grade so was Besonderes an sich gehabt hätte, sondern grade vielleicht, weil er das nicht hatte und auch an uns in unserer Verscheuchung und Verschüchterung nichts Besonderes fand und mit uns wie mit ganz gewöhnlichen sonstigen Menschen in Verkehr und Umgang kam!“ (B.A. 18/109)

Although Schaumann never refers to himself specifically as a compassionate person (as we shall see, his self-characterisations, although certainly positive, generally apply to other attributes!), and although he only rarely hints that his relationships with other people are even partly founded on human sympathy, it is plain that considerations of a compassionate or humanitarian nature play a prominent role in his general outlook and way of life: not only

does he befriend the outcasts in the Rote Schanze when noone else is prepared to do so; he also takes pains to make Quakatz's old age as pleasant and frictionless as possible, even going to the length of psychological tricks in order to make life more tolerable for him;<sup>23</sup> in addition he is constantly aware of the need to maintain Tinchén's hard-won peace of mind (this is one of the reasons why he delays so long in revealing the truth about the murder of Kienbaum), and his decision not to betray Störzer's guilty secret surely indicates that in his own system of values humanity and compassion occupy a significant position, certainly more significant than what might in this case be ironically termed the public interest.

Goodwill and compassion are thus seen to represent important aspects of Schaumann's personality, just as important as his reflective and imaginative capacities. This sympathetic, humanitarian side of his personality is not, however, of itself a decisively differentiating element; no doubt some of his philistine neighbours in the town, for all their lack of critical independence, are in their own way just as warm-hearted and considerate as he. What sets Schaumann so manifestly apart, and what establishes him so clearly as the dominant force in Stopfkuchen is not either of the two

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23 By "psychological tricks" I mean the little deceptions practised by Schaumann on Quakatz to make the latter feel a useful and reintegrated member of society. In particular he achieves this by issuing an open invitation to his wedding, by having business contacts visit the Rote Schanze and observe the customary politenesses towards Quakatz, and by giving him the impression that their trips round the fields in search of fossil remains were crucial to the value of the sugar shares they had acquired in selling the rest of the land. This last example, related on B.A. 18/169 and 170, is an especially striking illustration of the use of illusion through superior insight (a manifestation of what, at the end of the last Chapter of Section II, I called the "principle of humanity").



characteristics I have tried to demonstrate but their effect when combined together in the one personality. With Schaumann we have an illustration of the old adage that the whole is equal to more than the sum of the parts; that is to say, it is the fusion within one character of a highly developed reflective and imaginative capacity on the one hand and practical human warmheartedness on the other that makes Schaumann the positively memorable figure he undoubtedly is. And this fact, when recognised, opens the way to a wider appreciation of his significance in terms of Raabe's work as a whole; for do these two separate characteristics not remind us of the two principles I mentioned at the conclusion of the previous Chapter, the principles of truth and humanity, which Raabe illustrated repeatedly in the course of his life's work, without ever finding himself able to assert one at the expense of the other?<sup>24</sup> Does it not seem as if, in incorporating these at first sight apparently conflicting features in the personality of Schaumann, Raabe is attempting to reproduce a synthesis of these two fundamental principles within an individual character? And, if this is indeed the case, does it mean that in the figure of Schaumann Raabe has created an ideal hero whose way of life he wishes to invest with general, or even universal validity? Has he, in fact, reached a point where the ideal has been not only sought after but has been given palpable form? In view both of Schaumann's almost overwhelming dominance within the novel itself and of the striking parallels between his characterisation and Raabe's continual search for a fusion of his two warring principles, it is indeed tempting to

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24 cf. Chapter II, 5 of this study, especially pages 263-68.

answer all of these questions in the affirmative, and certain critics have had little or no hesitation in doing so.<sup>25</sup> It is, I believe, undeniable, that Raabe intended Schaumann to be seen in a predominantly positive light, but I submit also that to see him as an ideal hero, and particularly as someone whose solution Raabe is commending to humanity at large, is to go beyond the evidence both of the novel itself and of Raabe's well documented attitude towards it. This view is based on four main considerations, which I should now like to present. These are the admitted subjectivity of the book as a whole; the degree of justification afforded to viewpoints other than Schaumann's; the ambiguity of some of the central motifs; and the role played in the novel by chance and the force of circumstances.

The view that Stopfkuchen is one of Raabe's most essentially subjective works has been almost universally accepted by scholars and critics for many years. It is based partly on a high level of

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25 See, for example, Witschel, op.cit., p.40 (where Schaumann's qualities are likened by implication to those suggested in Goethe's poem "Das Göttliche"), 41 (where he is described as "eine Vorwegnahme des Radardenkers unserer Zeit") and 60 ("Von einem Anflug von Menschenverachtung abgesehen, besitzt Stopfkuchen ja nur positive Eigenschaften".) Pierre Bange too takes the view that in Schaumann Raabe has created a figure of god-like dominance, but he condemns what he sees as the consequent denial of the claims of external reality: "L'oeuvre entière n'est plus qu'une gigantesque métaphore de l'original qui en est l'objet unique et le sujet; ou du moins, l'oeuvre est un réseau de métaphores projetées à partir de ce centre unique et en dehors de toute référence à une réalité extérieure. Stopfkuchen est d'une cohérence interne parfaite, c'est une machine remarquablement montée mais incapable de recevoir et de transformer une matière première extérieure. L'obésité de Stopfkuchen s'élargit aux dimensions du monde entier. L'apothéose de l'original a pour condition son solipsisme." (Bange, op.cit., p.10). This argument is based on the assumption, contained in the phrase "l'apothéose de l'original", that Raabe idealises Schaumann to the point of deification. I hope to show in what follows that this is very far from the case.



apparently autobiographical allusion within the novel, and partly on the evidence of Raabe's comments on it in letters and conversations. As far as the internal indications are concerned, Karl Hoppe, in his Appendix to Stopfkuchen in volume 18 of the Braunschweiger Ausgabe, leaves no doubt as to his own conviction that the figure of Schaumann is first and foremost a fictional representative of the author himself:

„Gewiß besteht zwischen den faktischen Begebenheiten im Stopfkuchen und denen im Leben Raabes, rein stofflich betrachtet, keine Parallele. Es kann aber nicht nachdrücklich genug hervorgehoben werden, daß die Schilderungen, die sich auf Heinrich Schaumann, genannt Stopfkuchen, beziehen, in verhüllter, symbolischer Form die Entwicklung widerspiegeln, die Raabe aus einer konfliktreichen Jugend zur Selbstbehauptung in der Welt führte.“ (B.A. 18/424)

He goes on (B.A. 18/425) to list several parallels between Raabe's own situation and the portrayal of Schaumann - childhood isolation and unhappiness; difficulties at school; years of indecision about a future career; humiliation within a circle of better established contemporaries; and ultimate success in the very individual way of life on which he finally chose to embark. Although these parallels cannot always be followed through on a detailed level (Schaumann's financial position is, for example, much more favourable than Raabe's ever was), they are sufficiently convincing on a general level to support the suggestion that Stopfkuchen should be seen in large measure as a novel of primarily individual interest and application; it was intended as much for Raabe's personal satisfaction as for commercial dissemination among the public. (Indeed, on several occasions we even come across what seem to be expressions of pleasurable anticipation on Raabe's part that the essential meaning of the book will not be obvious to the reading

public, that the vast majority will, in fact, misunderstand it entirely - a curious attitude for a professional writer to adopt!)<sup>26</sup>

It seems that if Raabe had the public in mind at all when he was writing Stopfkuchen, it was mainly as the object of his superior mockery; the major purport of the book lay in his personal satisfaction with the literary expression he was able to give to his own situation.

The essentially subjective nature of Stopfkuchen is further highlighted by Raabe's recorded comments on the novel. A number of these, mainly extracts from his correspondence, have been drawn together by Hoppe (B.A. 18/425-27), and there is no need to duplicate these at this stage. Suffice it to say that the evidence adduced there provides ample justification for the editor's comment:

".....es war ein Bekenntnis zu sich und seiner Art, das Leben zu führen, das er in ihm (Stopfkuchen) abgelegt hatte."<sup>27</sup> Before

26 See, for example, the following passages from these letters to Edmund Sträter (17.11.1890): "Dies ist mein wirklich s u b j e k t i v e s Buch und ein Kunstwerk insofern, als nur Wenige Solches aus der Schnurre herausfinden werden." (B.A., Ergänzungsband 2, p.287 also quoted by Hoppe, B.A. 18/426) and to Paul Gerber (9.1.1893): "Sie haben sich vortrefflich hineingelesen in die Geschichte von der Eroberung der rothen Schanze; daß es sich dabei auch ein wenig allegorisch oder symbolisch um den künstlerischen Lebensweg des Autors und die Eroberung der Kunst, eine humoristische Erzählung zu schreiben, handele, konnten Sie natürlich nicht wissen" (ibid., p.340, also quoted by Hoppe, B.A. 18/426). It seems to me that these sentiments provide at least a partial elucidation of Raabe's explanation as to why he considered Stopfkuchen to be his best work: ".....da habe ich die menschliche Kanaille am festesten gepackt gehabt!" (Recorded by M. Adler and quoted by Hoppe, B.A. 18/427)

27 B.A. 18/427. That this is only a partial summary of what Stopfkuchen is about will, I hope, become clear as my argument progresses; nevertheless it is, I believe, an accurate observation on Raabe's relationship to the work in question.



moving on to other considerations, I should like, however, to quote one short but significant passage from a letter written by Raabe to Paul Heyse almost two years after the completion of the novel:

Müßte man nicht in der Tretmühle weiter, so würde dieses Buch mein letztes gewesen sein. Nehmen Sie die rothe Schanze als die deutsche humoristische Weltanschauung und den dicken Schaumann als den dünnen Raabe, so haben Sie eine ganz feine Symbolik!<sup>28</sup>

Whatever light irony may be involved in the tone of this extract, it is clear that Raabe meant its content to be taken seriously; his novel is, to a much greater extent than the public or even the critics of the 1890s could possibly realise, a personal document, almost, one might say, "the fragment of a grand confession", something which he wrote primarily for his own satisfaction and which, at least as far as the portrayal of the central figure is concerned, is not intended as a work of general comment. Inevitably, therefore, the validity of Schaumann's achievement is grounded exclusively in personal terms, that is to say, it does not extend beyond the hero himself, and certainly not beyond the author. Raabe himself does not claim for it any degree of general validity.

It may, of course, be objected that an argument such as this, based on biographical data and speculative parallels, is by itself hardly conclusive proof of an author's intentions, far less of the

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28 Letter of 13.3.1892, quoted in Karl Hoppe: "Aus Raabes Briefwechsel", in Hoppe: Wilhelm Raabe. Beiträge zum Verständnis seiner Person und seines Werkes, Göttingen, 1967, p.53. cf. also this passage from a letter of 13.6.1891 to Edmund Sträter, again emphasising the subjective origins and appeal of the novel: "Daß der Stopfkuchen eines der unverschämtesten Bücher ist, die jemals geschrieben worden sind, hat der Freund, Braunschweigerstraße 1a, doch noch nicht genug heraus gefunden. Nun, thut nichts! Auch diese Schönheit und Tugend an dem Dinge werden wohl noch einmal zu Geltung kommen und verdrießlich-zustimmende Liebhaber finden." (B.A. Ergänzungsband 2, p.301, quoted by Hoppe, B.A. 18/432).

success or otherwise of their execution, but while conceding that point as a general principle, I submit that in the case of Stopfkuchen it does, in fact, lead to the correct conclusion, for the same answer suggests itself when we discard all external considerations and look solely at what is contained within the pages of the novel itself. To this end I should like to turn now at some length to the second and possibly crucial aspect of my argument: the concessions made in the novel to viewpoints other than Schaumann's.

Although, as I stated earlier, Schaumann is undoubtedly the dominant force in Stopfkuchen, things are not seen solely or entirely from his viewpoint; despite the obvious and weighty parallels between author and hero, Raabe does not identify absolutely with the central figure. This is clear both from his attitude to Eduard and from various hints of a negative or at least qualifying nature concerning Schaumann. As far as Eduard is concerned, he seems on first reading to represent nothing more than a convenient sounding-board for his friend's interminable "monologues" and a useful tool in the immediate exercise of his revenge on the local community; critics who take this view have sometimes tended to assume that his repeated scoldings at the hands of Schaumann are echoed by Raabe, and have suggested that in the personality of Eduard, Raabe has created a figure of mockery, and even of contempt, at any rate a negative character with whom we are not meant to sympathise except perhaps by reason of his very dullness. Pierre Bange, for example, sees him as a figure of almost complete insignificance, not even worthy of the title narrator ("Eduard n'est pas le vrai narrateur; il n'est que le transcripteur éberlué du



monologue de Stopfkuchen"); Herman Meyer calls him, rather pejoratively, a „Durchschnittsmensch" whose only function is to allow us to see the contrasting magnificence of Schaumann („der überragende Ausnahmensch"); and according to Günter Witschel he is „ohnehin nur eine Kontrastfigur." On the other hand we do not have to look far to find comments of a more positive nature: positive comments are to be found, for example, in studies by Hubert Ohl („Eduard ist auch weit mehr als eine bloße Randfigur des erzählten Geschehens: er ist in einem sehr umfassenden strukturellen Sinne Kontrastfigur zu Stopfkuchen"), Hermann Pongs, who arrives finally at the qualified approval of the formulation „ein Durchschnittstypus nobler Art", and Peter Detroy, who speaks of Eduard as „einem ebenbürtigen Gesinnungsgenossen" for Schaumann.<sup>29</sup>

In the light of this striking diversity of opinion, where does the truth really lie? What is the function of Eduard, especially with reference to his relationship with Schaumann, and are we to look on him as an insignificant figure or as a character with a certain weight and justification of his own? On first reading I think, as I suggested earlier, that most people will react rather negatively towards Eduard: despite his years of absence from the local community he has made little or no attempt to free himself from the social prejudices and assumptions of those who stayed at home, and until his unquestioned ideology is explicitly called in question by Schaumann's blatant aggressiveness (Ohl refers in this

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29 Bange, op.cit., p.7; Meyer: „Raum und Zeit...", p.111; Witschel, op.cit., p.60; Ohl, Eduards Heimkehr..., p.249; Pongs; op. cit., p.555; Detroy, op.cit., p.132. See also Detroy, op.cit., pp.49, 109, 111-112 and 123.

respect, with justification, to the „Erschütterung seiner Weltordnung, die so groß ist, daß sie einem völligen Einsturz gleichzukommen droht“),<sup>30</sup> his view not only of Schaumann himself but of the whole area of their commonly experienced childhood has obviously not been subjected to critical review of any kind. This is evident above all in two areas. First of all it is seen in the moods and feelings he recalls in the opening sections of the novel, that is, in the parts devoted to his experience before the visit to the Rote Schanze. There his unconscious attachment to the values of the community he thought he had left behind is clear from the unwittingly naive self-characterisation of the first few pages, and especially from the way he describes the walk with his childhood friends from the „Brummersumm“ to his hotel the night before his visit to the Rote Schanze. In these brief recollections Eduard reveals himself - sometimes deliberately, but more often unwittingly - as a man whose values and ways of thinking are still basically the same as those of his contemporaries who had stayed in the town and pursued their careers at home; everything from his opening justification of business and money-making (B.A. 18/7) through the naively clichéd wonderment he expresses at the sight of the starlight (B.A. 18/8-9) to his automatic association of culture with commerce and politics (B.A. 18/9: „Wovon man reden mag, ob Politik,

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30 Ohl: „Eduards Heimkehr...“, p.267. A small point worthy of note in this connection but, as far as I know, not mentioned in any previous study of Raabe is the tone of the first sentence of the book: „Wieder an Bord! -“ (B.A. 18/7). It seems to me that in retrospect the reader is entitled to infer from this heading a feeling of intense relief on the part of Eduard that he is at last safely out of range of Schaumann's telling reproaches and invidious comparisons.



"Börsengeschäften, Fabrikangelegenheiten, Ästhetik:....") reveals him as a man of little independence whose years of separation from his childhood environment have had only a very minimal effect on his allegiance to the norms he grew up with and accepted as a youth and young adult. Again, his own almost complete lack of reflection is indicated as early as the first page, where he asks the question: „Wie kommen Menschen dahin, wo sie sich, sich besinnend, zu eigener Verwunderung dann und wann finden?" (B.A. 18/7) If, as seems to be suggested, this is the first occasion on which Eduard has attempted seriously to come to terms with this question, it is hardly surprising that in the course of his reunion with Schaumann his attitudes and assumptions are shown to be shallow, derivative and unsound.

Eduard's lack of critical independence is also suggested through certain aspects of his attitude to Schaumann, and in particular through the circumlocutions by which he chooses to refer to him. Raabe's preference for this technique has already been mentioned at various points in this study,<sup>31</sup> where I have tried to indicate its significance as a means of characterising the person so described. This is generally the use to which it is put in novels with a third-person narrator. Here, however, with a first-person narrator, its significance, though undiminished, is less direct - showing as they do not necessarily the author's view of the character involved but simply that of the narrator, himself for all practical purposes merely another dependent figure, such circumlocutions tell us more about Eduard himself than about Schaumann. In this context the

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<sup>31</sup> See p.127 of this study, Note 54, where further references are given.

various images which the figure of Schaumann suggests to Eduard are particularly revealing. Broadly speaking, four main categories can be distinguished: one reflects Eduard's impatience at Schaumann's annoyingly tedious and long drawn-out approach to the question of the murderer's true identity (this includes such examples as „der Unverbesserliche", 104; „der feiste Folterknecht", 177; „der Folterer", 181; and „der Mensch", 115, spoken from a depth of frustration); a second group recalls what Eduard sees as his long-standing and continuing friendship with Schaumann („unser gemeinsamer Vetter Stopfkuchen", 8; „mein Freund Stopfkuchen, mein anderer Kindheits-, Feld-, Wald-und Wiesenfreund Stopfkuchen", 26; „der Jugendfreund", 61; „mein Freund Heinrich Schaumann", 162; and many others); a third refers to Schaumann's present position as owner of the Rote Schanze („der Herr der Roten Schanze", 69-70; „der jetzige unbestrittene Herr auf der Roten Schanze", 150; „der jetzige Mann von der Roten Schanze, der Erbnehmer des Mordbauern Quakatz", 184); and a fourth group, by far the largest in terms of variants, emphasises Schaumann's obesity and physical lethargy („der Dickste, der Faulste, der Gefräßigste unter uns von damals", 22; „das fast unheimlich behagliche, feiste Geschöpf", 80; „der dicke Schaumann", 159, 160, 194; and many other examples). It will be noted that in each of these cases the incidence is not restricted to any single section of the novel; we can, therefore, conclude that the phrases I have quoted, along with many similar examples, offer a fair insight into Eduard's attitude to Schaumann at all points in the narrative; and in view of this the pattern which emerges is most striking: either the image is rooted in Eduard's blissfully unquestioning relationship to Schaumann or in a momentary emotion with respect to him (this is the nature of the first two categories) or it concentrates on some essentially external factor, obvious even to an



uninformed casual observer (this can be said of both the third and the fourth categories). At no stage is there any evidence of insight into, for example, the crucially distinctive aspects of Schaumann's character which we looked at earlier. What these circumlocutions demonstrate above all is firstly that Eduard's view of Schaumann is related more to his own position and psychological needs than to the objective truth of the situation, and secondly, that it is based on superficial criteria which adapt the clichés and prejudices of past relationships to a changed reality in the present;<sup>32</sup> and when it is realised - even leaving out of account all direct speech between Eduard and Schaumann - that in the course of this moderately sized novel (covering only 201 pages in the Braunschweiger Ausgabe) Eduard uses the name „Stopfkuchen", with all its childhood associations and prejudices, on over one hundred occasions, the degree to which his view of Schaumann is conditioned by unquestioned assumptions and assimilated clichés becomes all too

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32 In addition to its function as a partial characterisation of Eduard, this observation is highly significant as an indication of the way in which the older Raabe tends to draw together several apparently or supposedly diverse considerations and to present them as an integrated complex within one novel or even, as is the case in this example, within one character. Through his view of Schaumann - clearly implied in the nicknames and circumlocutions he uses - Eduard reveals himself unwittingly as a representative not only of accepted social values (and thus as someone whose characterisation is illustrative of Raabe's attitude to the escape into conformity) but also as a figure reminiscent in some ways of Fritz Langreuter - a typical practitioner, although on a much more modest scale, of the escape into memory. The skilful focussing of these two major themes on one aspect of the characterisation of a single figure is characteristic of the high degree of structural and thematic integration so typical of the late Raabe, who was thus able to give formal expression to his personal belief in the interdependence and mutual conditioning of all different aspects of life, the so-called „Zusammenhang der Dinge." (cf. also p.176 of this study and Note 39)

apparent.

It might seem, on the basis of the points I have just put forward, that those critics who take an unbendingly negative view of Eduard are, after all, in the right and that his only function is to make Schaumann's superiority seem even more overwhelming than it would otherwise appear. I feel, nevertheless, that such a view does less than justice both to Eduard as a character in his own right and to the studied weighting which Raabe imposed on the novel as a whole. The truth of the matter is that although Schaumann's dominance is virtually unchallengeable, Raabe is not so uncharitable, or indeed unrealistic, as to deny to Eduard any degree of justification. Eduard may not share Schaumann's critical independence or the highly developed reflective capacities which gave rise to it, but he is in his own way a decent, honest citizen who is sufficiently alert finally to sense that his own assumptions are not as comprehensively reliable as he had once supposed. In a way that his contemporaries in the local community do not attempt to emulate, he is in the end able to arrive at some sort of understanding of the lesson in his friend's outwardly unremarkable way of life:

Die Menschheit hatte immer noch die Macht, sich aus dem Fett, der Ruhe, der Stille heraus dem sehnigsten, hageren, fahrigen Konquistadorentum gegenüber zur Geltung zu bringen. Heinrich Schaumann, genannt Stopfkuchen, hatte dieses mir gegenüber gründlich besorgt. (B.A. 18/204)

To some extent at least he comes to appreciate the fragility of his position even if he proves ultimately unable to abandon it. In addition it is important not to underestimate the significance of his return to his childhood home. This is not simply a case of a



financially successful middle-aged emigrant making a sentimental pilgrimage to a place where he had spent his youth; that aspect does have a part to play, but the significance of Eduard's journey stretches out beyond such immediate considerations. Despite the inherent ambiguity of its implications (for, of course, the journey brings him into direct contact not only with Schaumann but also with his former friends and associates in the local community) I think it is reasonable to interpret Eduard's return to Germany - which he undertakes alone, sacrificing the companionship of the wife and children he is so proud of - as, in some ways, a quest to discover or rediscover the truth about life. It certainly seems to point forward to the similar journey of Fritz Feyerabend in Altershausen (1902), where the idea of a quest for the rediscovery of the meaning of life is formulated much more explicitly;<sup>33</sup> with Eduard this urge is less explicit, indeed he is not conscious of the true significance of his journey until his stay is almost over, and even then, as we have seen, it is very doubtful whether he will be able to absorb and apply fully the lessons it has taught

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33 See Chapter II, 3 of this study, especially pp. 176-80.

him;<sup>34</sup> nevertheless the quest after truth, however passive its origins or partial its success, has to be recognised as a positive feature in the characterisation of Eduard who cannot, in the end, be relegated to the position of almost complete rejection to which

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34 Amongst other ways, the probability of Eduard's ultimate failure to break away from the standards he has lived by all his life is indicated by his repeated designation as an outsider, someone who is merely visiting a place he has known many years ago rather than someone returning home and reintegrating himself into the community he had left. This feeling of essential separation is emphasised above all by Schaumann's frequent ironic reference to Africa and to Eduard's many long journeys - e.g. "interessantester aller Afrikaner und bester aller alten Freunde" (B.A. 18/65); "bei dir zu Hause im heißesten Afrika" (B.A. 18/100); and (by way of deliberate ironic contrast): "Was könnte ich Hinhooker einem Weltwanderer gleich dir Merkwürdiges zu weisen haben, was solch ein rasendes Drauflosstürzen erforderte?" (B.A. 18/61). At least a dozen further examples could be cited, showing how persistent this in itself unobtrusive means of characterisation becomes. These are found, i.a., on B.A. 18/83, 85, 114, 115, 129, 130, 136, 137, 145, 148, 156, 168 and 182. It is true that these examples all occur in the narrated time, and that they do not necessarily apply absolutely to Eduard's future situation; as the narrative closes before his return to South Africa, any statement concerning his further development must be largely conjecture. Nevertheless it would be surprising, to say the least, if as the result of his admittedly disconcerting encounter with Schaumann Eduard were suddenly and irreversibly to cast off the attitudes and standards of a lifetime. Detroy's suggestions that Eduard undergoes a "Bewußtseinsveränderung", that he achieves a "Neubesinnung" and a "neue Reflexionsstufe", and that he "beginnt, ... sich völlig freizumachen von jeder Heteronomie" (Detroy, op.cit., pp.91, 104, 109, 112), seem to me, in view of the speculative elements already mentioned, arguable, but almost impossible to sustain from the text alone.



some critics have attempted to consign him;<sup>35</sup> his way of life and his world are not invested with the full approval of the author - far from it - but they are accorded a fair degree of justification in their own right. Eduard is not a mere cipher or narrative tool, as Bange claims; he is a figure of some influence, whose weight makes a significant contribution to the balance of the novel.<sup>36</sup>

The weight accorded to the figure of Eduard is, then, of some significance for the weighting of the novel as a whole, and in terms of the central confrontation between him and Schaumann it is bound to reduce the latter's overwhelming dominance, at least in some degree. This in itself suggests that Raabe does not intend

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35 The significance of the journey in Raabe is a question which, as far as I am aware, has not as yet been subjected to thorough critical examination; it should provide a fruitful topic of study in the future. In very general terms, however, it seems to me that Raabe's attitude to the journey undergoes a profound change during the period of his most mature creativity. Whereas in earlier works he had presented it as a movement out into the world, as a means of raising the individual's horizons, of widening his experience and of deepening his appreciation of life (one thinks here primarily of Die Leute aus dem Walde (1862) and Der Hungerpastor, 1863), its significance is later reversed: in novels such as Alte Nester (1879), Stopfkuchen (1889), Altershausen (1902) and even Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) we are dealing with a movement from the wider world back to the scenes of childhood and adolescence, with, as it were, a search on the part of the experienced man of the world to rediscover the truths he has lost "outside" and which he thinks are still preserved in the place where he spent his youth. The earlier pattern usually leads to what might be called unconvincing success (that is, the hero achieves most or all of his goals, but the reader is not won over by the manner of their achievement), while in the later works we are faced with convincing failure (the hero finds that a mere journey - whether undertaken in reality or in the mind - does not, after all, do away with all the doubts, imperfections and uncertainties of life; his quest must, therefore, end in failure. The reader, however, is able to sympathise entirely with the honesty and complexity of this approach).

36 My view on this point is shared by Ohl ("Eduards Heimkehr...", especially pp.272-75), by Helmers (Die bildenden Mächte..., pp.69 and 99) and by Detroy (op.cit., pp.49, 109, 111-112, 123, 132).

Schaumann to be regarded as an ideal hero, even on a totally subjective level, that is to say, even taking into account the autobiographical element present in the work, and if we look for a moment at the figure of Schaumann himself we shall, I believe, find further confirmation of this suggestion.

At first sight the figure of Schaumann seems as <sup>uncompromisingly</sup> ~~undilutedly~~ positive as Eduard's seemed on first reading to be negative: the presentation of his unmasking of the townspeople's smug narrow-mindedness through his solution of the murder mystery is certainly clear and uncompromising; his reflective capacities enable him to get at the truth when the machinery of the law could not; and both before and after the discovery of the murderer's identity he is able, by virtue of his superior knowledge of human nature, to manipulate the reactions and behaviour of the townspeople with sovereign accomplishment. This is, nevertheless, only one aspect of the novel, and however clear-cut and decisive it may seem, it does not represent the whole story. We cannot assume, simply because Schaumann is able to confound and bewilder his adversaries with such consummate ease, that he himself is portrayed in a totally unproblematic light. Indeed, some aspects of his portrayal which at first sight appear entirely positive prove on closer examination to have an element of ambiguity.

This is nowhere more evident than in the general depiction of Schaumann's relationship to the townspeople. It is, of course, the case that by the time of Eduard's visit, Schaumann is in total command of the situation: his ability to manipulate not only the responses of the townspeople but also to bring Eduard to the realisation of Störzer's guilt at the very moment when they are



standing at his coffin bears witness to a remarkable degree of psychological discernment on his part; it is also true that even as a boy, he seems to have had an extraordinary ability to size up his schoolmates and to pass critical but accurate judgment on them; and there is no doubt that in the course of Eduard's visit to the Rote Schanze, he seems able both to anticipate the reactions of Eduard and Tinchén and to read their thoughts from facial expressions they were either unaware of or had attempted to conceal.<sup>37</sup> In this context there is no reason to question his high level of critical perception. At the same time, however, and, as it seems to me, inextricably bound up with this undoubted achievement, he betrays characteristics of a less positive nature which must seriously weaken any argument which seeks to establish him as an ideal hero, far less as one whose solution can claim general validity. Just as obvious as his victory over the local community (evident both in his "conquest" of

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37 Both Schaumann's acute psychological awareness and the degree to which Eduard is, quite unknowingly, manipulated, are clear from the following extracts from Eduard's record of their walk into the town via Störzer's house: „Stopfkuchen führte mich um den ‚Wall‘. Weshalb, sagte er nicht, und ich fragte auch nicht danach.“ (B.A. 18/157) ... „Herrgott, und auch Störzer!“ fiel mir ein. „Auch der! Und du wolltest wieder an ihm vorbeigehen?“ Der Gedanke kam mir wirklich zur rechten Zeit. Was ich nach der Nachricht vom Brummersumme her versäumt hatte, konnte ich ja jetzt noch nachholen und dem alten, treuen Freunde einen Besuch abstatten. ... Ich nahm den Arm meines Führers:/ „Heinrich, ich erinnere mich eben! Es sind kaum hundert Schritte weit. Da liegt sein Haus - ‘/ ‚Wessen Haus?““ (B.A. 18/158) And after Eduard has explained, Schaumann replies, with superb dissimulation: „Wenn du meinst? Ei wohl, das ist sein Schornstein hinter den Baumwipfeln. Der brave Störzer! Nun, Zeit haben wir zu dem, was du meine Rätsellösung nennst, nachher immer noch, und ein großer Umweg zu dem alten, guten Kerl ist's grade auch nicht. Ich bin ganz zu deiner Verfügung.“ (B.A. 18/159) The whole episode is conducted by Schaumann with such subtle certainty that Eduard is and remains totally unaware that the visit to Störzer's house was at the centre of his friend's intention from the beginning.

the Rote Schanze and in the solving of the murder mystery) is the smugness with which he regards it. This must be closely linked to the desire for revenge which he had harboured as a boy and which he never entirely abandons, and it certainly finds particular expression in his repeated assertions to Eduard that he and the others were as boys too immature and as adults too narrow-minded to understand his outlook or, latterly, to appreciate his achievement. The following is only one example from many:

„Ich kann es nur immer von neuem wiederholen, Eduard: ihr habt mich verkannt, die Schätze in meinem Busen lagen euch, offen gesagt, dummen Jungen viel zu tief.“<sup>38</sup>

There is, of course, an element of truth in this: Eduard and his friends were indeed too immature as boys to understand Schaumann's outlook and, as we have seen, the townspeople are still, for the most part, too philistine to comprehend his achievement, far less acknowledge it. Here Schaumann is, in a sense, merely indulging his legitimate pleasure at the way events have justified his actions and attitudes. There are, however, numerous occasions when he seems to go far beyond this essentially harmless indulgence, betraying what can only be described as blatant conceit and self-

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38 B.A. 18/116. cf. also the following particularly notable examples: „Siehst du, Eduard, so zahlt der überlegene Mensch nach Jahren ruhigen Wartens geduldig ertragene Verspottung und Zurücksetzung heim. Darauf, auf diese Genugtuung, habe ich hier in der Kühle gewartet, während du mit deinem Le Vaillant im heißen Afrika auf die Elefanten-, Nashorn- und Giraffenjagd gingest oder dich auf andere unnötige Weise ab- und ausschwitztest.“ (B.A. 18/96) At another point he refers, in front of his friend, to „Eduards dürres aber wohlwollendes, wenngleich auch etwas verlegen gespanntes Kafferngesicht.“ (B.A. 18/103), and later, speaking of what he describes as his gift of assimilation and dissimulation, he continues: „Ihr habt diese Gabe lange nicht genug an mir gewürdigt, lieber Eduard; ihr waret wohl noch nicht reif genug dafür.“ (B.A. 18/134)



satisfaction. When he describes himself as „der Überlegene Mensch“ (B.A. 18/96) this may not seem so obvious, but when he talks, as if the comparison should be taken for granted, of „andere, gewöhnlichere gute Ehemänner“ (B.A. 18/95) and says to Tinchchen, surely aware of the almost blasphemous ring his words must have: „Kenne ich nicht alle deine Wünsche im voraus?“ (B.A. 18/95), he gives the impression of a man whose self-esteem has grown to a level unacceptable for a character intended to be seen in an ideal or idealised light, an impression which is further confirmed by the almost philistine grin which accompanies so many of his, for Eduard, infuriating homilies.<sup>39</sup> Despite his undoubtedly admirable achievements, Schaumann is in this respect little different from the neighbours he so despises.<sup>40</sup> For him the way to individual growth and maturity is a tightrope from which the danger of a fatal fall into smugness and self-satisfaction is immediate and ever-present. He is, to alter the metaphor somewhat, only one step away from the philistinism of the local community from which he has so carefully separated himself. His solution, in the very nature of things an individual one, must also be seen as fragile and provisional, one

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39 That this kind of conceit has been part of Schaumann's character since boyhood is clear from this statement which he makes to Eduard as a schoolboy on their first recorded visit to the Rote Schanze: „Da sitzen sie nun auf ihren Bockstühlen, dein und mein Alter, Eduard, und haben keine Ahnung davon, von welcher Höhe aus Stopfkuchen sie betrachtet oder, nach eurer Ausdrucksweise, auf sie runterkuckt.“ (B.A. 18/46, my emphasis). Similarly, back in the "present", he annoys Eduard by telling him: „...Bildung steckt an, und ich bin immer ein sehr gebildeter Mensch gewesen, wenn ihr da unten es auch nicht immer Wort haben wolltet.“ (B.A. 18/56) His infuriating grin is recorded by Eduard, i.a., on B.A. 18/109, 114, 140, 142 and 153.

40 cf. Meyer: Sonderling, p.281.

which must be continually re-established if it is not to founder by reason of the difficulties inherent in its very realisation.<sup>41</sup> It cannot be regarded as in any way ideal, exemplary or, even on the personal level, totally successful. (In similar fashion, and despite temptations to the contrary, it is important to recognise that the two worlds - for that is what it amounts to - depicted in Unruhige Gäste are not set against each other and judged in ethical terms; it is not a question of the mountain village enjoying moral as well as geographical superiority over the low-lying spa resort. As both Edward Brill and Gertrud Höhler have demonstrated, these separate worlds are not only justified in their own terms; their adherents are unable to transfer from one to the other without causing widespread havoc and suffering in both. They are strictly separated, but this separation does not betoken a moral judgment on the part of the author.<sup>42</sup> The same pattern is not, however, found in Das Odfeld, where Raabe's sympathies seem to lie almost exclusively with Buchius, while the school authorities are accorded

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41 Both the inherent weaknesses and the provisional nature of Schaumann's solution have already been indicated by other writers approaching the question from a different angle. cf. Moltmann-Wendel, op.cit., pp.57-58 (with particular reference to the significance of the motif "Gehe heraus aus dem Kasten"); Ohl: "Eduards Heimkehr...", pp.273-275; and Helmers, who speaks of the "Übersteigerung" and "Absonderlichkeit" of the hero's world. (Die bildenden Mächte..., p.99).

42 In his introduction to Unruhige Gäste (1884), Brill speaks of "the confrontation of two irreconcilable worlds." (p.30) Whether or not Höhler adapted this phrase for her own study - she makes no acknowledgment of indebtedness - her formulation: "der unheilverbreitende Zusammenprall zweier Sphären" (op.cit., p.216) certainly seems to have much in common with Brill's suggestion of five years earlier.



little or no justification).

There is, then, a significant degree of ambiguity attaching to the central figure, and the same is true of certain wider issues in the novel, which have far-reaching implications in terms of the over-all aims of this study. This aspect of Raabe's intention in Stopfkuchen is, I believe, best illustrated by a brief examination of the ambiguity pervading some of the central motifs, and with this I now turn to the third main point of my argument.

In his article on Stopfkuchen, Hubert Ohl has pointed out the ambiguity of the "Riesenfaultier" motif, showing how it swings to and fro like a pendulum between positive and negative allusions: on the one hand it reflects Schaumann's apparent laziness, lethargy and immobility, and on the other it calls to mind his inner superiority and his composure in the face of transience (what Ohl has called „seine zeitenthobene Gelassenheit“).<sup>43</sup> It seems to me, for the reasons stated, that this ambiguity is an integral element in the portrayal of Schaumann, and that it is found not only in the „Riesenfaultier" motif but also in others of a wider application. The rather different double-edged nature of „unter der Hecke liegen" has already been demonstrated, and I shall return to the implications of that particular case at a later stage; for the moment, however, I want to look briefly at the associations of a third important motif: that of Schaumann's interest in palaeontology.

Until now this has been, as far as I am aware, the object of exclusively positive comment on the part of scholars and critics.

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<sup>43</sup> Ohl: „Eduards Heimkehr...", pp.273-75. The quotation is from p.274 cf. also Detroy, op.cit., especially pp.68-69.

It has been seen as a further illustration of Schaumann's reflective capacity and of his ability to accept his own humble position in terms of the age and size of the world. The study of palaeontology, it is argued, allows Schaumann to attain a more objective perspective regarding matters of immediate present concern; it demonstrates to him their essentially ephemeral nature and enables him thereby to approach them in a calmer and more detached frame of mind than he could otherwise have adopted; according to this interpretation it is, thus, of central importance in respect of his relations with the local community: it allows him to overcome the rejection and mockery of his neighbours and at the same time helps fashion the weapon by which he will ultimately lay bare their shallow facade of social respectability. Hoppe's comment in his Appendix to Stopfkuchen is a fair summary of what might be called the traditional interpretation of the palaeontology motif. Speaking of the significance of palaeontology in the correspondence between Raabe and Wilhelm Jensen, he continues:

„(Jensens Liebhaberei) erschöpfte sich nicht im Sammeln von Raritäten, sondern es verband sich mit ihr ein weltanschaulicher Aspekt: mit dem Einblick, den die Paläontologie über außerordentliche Zeiträume hinweg in das Leben gewährt, verlieren die Anliegen des gegenwärtigen Tagesablaufs an Bedeutung. Dies tritt in den Briefen Jensens, oft humorvoll unkleidet, zutage, und in ähnlicher Weise hilft die Paläontologie auch Stopfkuchen, mit den aktuellen Anliegen des Lebens



fertig zu werden."<sup>44</sup>

This particular interpretation is, I believe, correct as far as it goes, and with that reservation I subscribe to it absolutely, but it seems to me that the motif of palaeontology, the recurring image of „Urtiere“ and the „Mammutsgerippe“, also has a negative or at least a qualifying application, that it is, in fact, double-edged, and therefore to some degree ambiguous in the same way as the other motifs I looked at earlier. It would be rather extreme, despite possible similarities with other works - I am thinking here in particular of Wunnigel's passion for antiques, which was touched upon at an earlier point in this study<sup>45</sup> - to interpret Schaumann's interest in palaeontology as a kind of escapism into the dead past; apart from any objections of a detailed nature, the general tone both of Schaumann's characterisation and of the novel as a whole would belie such a view. I believe, nevertheless, that a less extreme though still basically negative element attaches to the

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44 B.A. 18/457. A similar view is taken by Ohl (Bild und Wirklichkeit..., pp.150-51) and by Moltmann-Wendel, op.cit., p.64; „Das Riesenmammut, das der alte Quakatz ‚zu seinem Trost‘ fand, ist mehr als Ablenkung vom Verdruss der Zeit. Es erinnert daran, daß es mitten in der Sintflut, im Haß, in Verachtung und Unfreiheit, ein Überleben geben kann.“ She goes on, however, to state what in my view is a clear over-interpretation of the significance of Schaumann: „Riesenmammut und Stopfkuchen, beide überdimensional in inneren und äußeren Qualitäten, werden nun auch in gleicher Weise schicksalsverwandt, ausgesondert von den anderen, gerettet vom Verderben, übriggeblieben vom Weltgericht. Wie im Odfeld ist die harmlose, scheinbar so biedere Liebhaberei innere zeitlose Verbundenheit mit einer Unversehrtheit und Andersartigkeit, die dem Ausgesonderten und Geretteten eigen ist.“ Detroy too does not extend his examination of the underlying ambivalence of the major motifs in Stopfkuchen to that of palaeontology; where he does deal with it (i.e., pp.75, 85, 95 and 98-99), his comments generally echo the point of view expressed by Hoppe. An almost identical view is expressed by Claude David, who speaks of „die Einführung der diluvii testes, dieser Mammut-Gebeine, welche die Permanenz der Zeit symbolisieren“, (David: „Über Wilhelm Raabes Stopfkuchen“, in Lebendige Form. Festschrift für Heinrich E.K. Henel. München, 1970, pp.259-275. Quotation from p.265).

45 See Chapter II, 2 of this study, especially pp.104-111.

„Urtiere“ motif and must be taken account of if we are to appreciate its full significance in terms of Raabe's wider intentions in writing Stopfkuchen. It seems to me that while not denying the partial application of the positive interpretation postulated by Raabe-critics up to the present, it is not going too far to see the „Urtiere“ and the „Mammutsgrippe“ also as indications that Schaumann's - and, for that matter, Raabe's - search to establish some comprehensive, over-all pattern to life is bound to end in failure. While they open Schaumann's eyes to a new dimension through making him aware of the immense tracts of time which have come and gone since the age of prehistoric monsters, they are themselves no longer part of the living world in any normal usage of the word. Even if they are in one sense alive by virtue of the realisations which they, albeit passively and unknowingly, impart, they are in another sense dead, inanimate, unable to communicate. What is more, I submit that they are, in some measure at least, not symbols of man's ability to establish a context for his existence within the realms of time and space and thereby to attain a greater understanding of the human situation, but rather indications of the massive immeasurability of creation, and of the ultimate mystery of life. The decades, centuries and millenia which have passed since the „Urtiere“ roamed the Earth do, certainly, induce in Schaumann a healthy realisation of the relative insignificance of contemporary events and relationships, but they also bear witness to the vast immensity of creation and to the vanity of any effort to try to encompass it all, whether on an intellectual or emotional level, in human terms. As I suggested above, the motif of the „Urtiere“ and the „Mammutsgrippe“ is, then, essentially double-edged: in the physical survival of



prehistoric fossils through countless periods of change, it hints at a continuing pattern of life and at the possibility of man's achieving an over-all understanding of it; at the same time, however, it demonstrates the inherent futility of his attempts to rise above his station and to comprehend something which is, by its very nature, beyond his grasp.

The implications of this interpretation are obvious and far-reaching: the notion that the world is an essentially mysterious creation which it is beyond the potential of mankind to comprehend is one which cannot coexist with the principle of an ideal hero, certainly not in the sense in which that term was defined earlier in this Chapter.<sup>46</sup> (The same considerations apply to the possible interpretations of Buchius' interest in palaeontology as it is presented in Das Odfeld (1887). To the best of my knowledge, no one has as yet suggested a variant from the traditional interpretation in that context).<sup>47</sup> The deliberate ambiguity with which Raabe invests the „Urtiere“ motif is important evidence for the view not only that Schaumann is not intended as an ideal hero but also that, at least within the context of human perception, the work as a whole is basically pessimistic. This interpretation is supported by the fourth and final consideration of my argument, to which I should now like to turn: the role played in Stopfkuchen by chance and the force of

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<sup>46</sup> See pp. 270 and 274-75 of this study.

<sup>47</sup> A typical comment is that of Moltmann-Wendel: „Noah Buchius' Wurzeln des Daseins reichen bis in die vorsintflutliche Zeit. Sein paläontologisches Interesse - wie auch später bei Stopfkuchen - ist mehr als spielerische Eigenart, sie bedeutet echte Seinsbezogenheit. Der erste und der zweite Noah werden in zeitloser Existenz identisch.“ (op.cit., p.45)

circumstances. This is not concerned directly, as the previous argument was, with the immediate characterisation of Schaumann; it does, however, have an important bearing on the applicability of his solution to other situations.

In Stopfkuchen, the force of circumstances manifests itself on two different levels which may at first sight seem rather contradictory but which do, when taken separately, lead to virtually the same conclusion. On the one hand we are concerned here with what might be seen as deliberate hints by Raabe as to its significance, and on the other with its implicit importance in terms of Raabe's manipulation of the sequence of events. Both factors are straightforward in themselves and can be dealt with quite briefly.

That Raabe sees the force of circumstances as an important, indeed vital factor in Schaumann's development is clear above all from the use he makes of the motif „unter der Hecke liegen.“ As I tried to demonstrate above,<sup>48</sup> this motif is applied not only to Schaumann's childhood rejection and isolation but also to the gradual but crucial development of his reflective capacities. The effect of this overlap, as it might be called, is to emphasise the interdependence of these two elements in the development of Schaumann's personality. His social isolation is not of itself the decisive factor, but his reflective capacities, although central to his development, would not have evolved as far as they do if he had not found himself in the first place in a particularly favourable position to exercise them, that is to say, if he had not been left

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<sup>48</sup> See pages 284-89 of this study.



so often by his schoolmates to think things over on his own. Here, as with the fusion, noted earlier, of the principles of truth and humanity,<sup>49</sup> it is the combination of factors which is decisive rather than the individual elements of themselves. Would Schaumann have achieved the level of mastery and perception he does if this particular set of circumstances had not happened to operate in his case? Normally such a question would be trivial and pointless in a literary context; we have to accept what the author has given us and work from that rather than speculate on what might have been in other circumstances. In this case, however, the question does have some value, for the answering of it forces us to recognise that Schaumann's development is dependent only secondarily on individual factors such as social isolation, reflective capacities and human sympathy, and that it is primarily the product of a coming together of all three. If this is indeed the case, it must be clear that on this count alone any attempt to establish Schaumann as an ideal hero whose solution has a validity wider than his own situation is ill-founded; he is the product of his own circumstances, as he himself admits, though sometimes rather quizzically, and might or might not have achieved as much in a different situation. Raabe's insistence on the force of circumstances as a central factor in Schaumann's development cannot but lessen, indeed negate entirely any wider validity which the solution arrived at by the central character in the novel might claim. It calls in question the whole notion that in the figure of Schaumann Raabe was suggesting the possibility of a personalised but open-ended deliverance from the perplexities and

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49 See pages 292-94 of this study.

antinomies of life.<sup>50</sup>

Whether or not this interpretation appears convincing depends to a large extent on the amount of emphasis placed by the individual reader on particular aspects of the novel. According to their own impressions, different readers will often draw differing conclusions from the same material. The precise application of the motif „unter der Hecke“, for example, will no doubt vary from one reader to another; I have tried to explain my own understanding of it, but am quite prepared to admit that other interpretations may well come closer to the truth. What is not open to argument, however, is the object of my final point, that is, the second manifestation of the force of circumstances in Stopfkuchen: Raabe's manipulation of the sequence of events.

It is surely beyond question that in this novel Raabe manipulates the external sequence of events, in at least one crucial instance, just as cunningly and ruthlessly as Schaumann is allowed to manipulate the responses and attitudes of Eduard and the townspeople: he is very careful not to let Schaumann become aware of Störzer's secret until after the death of Quakatz. Schaumann is not, therefore, in a position to expose the murderer until it is too late thereby to salvage any degree of belated satisfaction or compensation for the principal aggrieved party. Raabe is, of course, perfectly entitled to arrange things in this way if he so wishes, but

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50 The same is true of Phoebe Hahnemeyer (Unruhige Gäste 1884), often seen as an idealised figure. As Hühler has convincingly demonstrated, Phoebe is not to be regarded as a sort of autonomous saint, but first and foremost as a product of her upbringing, education and environment and, what is more, as someone who herself is totally unaware of this fact. (See especially Hühler, op.cit., pp.152-53).



the fact that he does so has important consequences in terms of the wider validity of Schaumann's solution: by choosing to order the sequence of events thus, he allows Schaumann to bypass an acute moral dilemma which he would have had to face if the truth had leaked out before the death of Quakatz. As it is, the choice confronting him is not a difficult one: reduced to its essentials it is, as he sees it, a question of Tinchén's peace of mind and the relative happiness of Störzer's old age on the one hand and of society's right to know the facts on the other. In this context he is able to come quickly and without any pangs of conscience to a decision in favour of doing and saying nothing, for, as he tells Eduard:

„Ich sah mir mein Weib an, sah mir die Zeitgenossenschaft an und nahm jeden aus der letztern, soweit sie um die Rote Schanze herum wohnte, vor. Um nachher von der Gesamtheit keinen Vorwurf zu verdienen, nahm ich es mit jedem einzelnen ernst; und - ich fand nicht e i n e n drunter, dem ich persönlich verpflichtet gewesen wäre, ihm sofort bekanntzumachen, wer in der Tat Kienbaum totgeschlagen hatte.“ (B.A. 18/180)

In terms of Schaumann's character and situation the decision is, indeed, almost automatic: by virtue, in part at least, of his reflective capacities he has found out the truth of the matter when no one else even suspected it, but his feelings of practical human sympathy for Tinchén and Störzer, along with his own past experiences at the hands of the local community and his present isolation from it, almost compel him to keep silent until after the death of Störzer. Thus he is able to apply his general principle: „ganz und gar nach seiner Natur leben“ to this particular problem and achieve a satisfying, comfortable solution. If, however, the truth had become known before the death of Quakatz, he would have been placed in a dilemma of agonising proportions: he would have

had to weigh the happiness and well-being of old Quakatz - and of Tinchén, for that matter - against the happiness and well-being of Störzer. He could have revealed the truth and thus dealt justly with Quakatz while consigning Störzer to an old age of misery and social ostracism (the almost universal boycott of his funeral is testimony enough to that) or he could have kept silence and thus dealt mercifully with Störzer while leaving Quakatz to eke out his last few years in unrelieved and undeserved rejection; whichever decision he took, the choice would have been a bitter one. By allowing the secret to emerge only after the death of Quakatz, however, Raabe makes Schaumann's path incomparably easier and removes his decision almost entirely from the field of moral conflict.<sup>51</sup> Now, as I admitted earlier, this is in itself a perfectly legitimate device, and I am in no way questioning its use in artistic terms. Nevertheless, its implications in terms of Raabe's attitude to his hero and in particular of the possible wider validity of Schaumann's way of life are of great importance: in sparing Schaumann this obvious moral dilemma, Raabe must also, whether or not this was his intention, weaken any claim to general applicability which Schaumann's way of life might have had, if indeed he does not thereby nullify it entirely. He has, to put it another way, made things too easy and clear-cut for Schaumann; if

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51 Detroy lists seven major coincidences on which the final unfolding of the action depends (op.cit., p.101, Note 147), but sees these as illustrative only of the effects of fate on the life of the individual, and of the author's power of selectivity. He adds that without this series of genuine as well as apparent coincidences, the "Seegesichte" would have been impossible. He does not, however, mention the much more fascinating function some of them exercise as elements allowing Raabe to offer Schaumann an unrealistically smooth path towards the realisation of his final ideal. In my view this is by far their most important aspect.



his solution were to command wider validity it would have to have been tested much more severely. As it is, in thus stretching the force of circumstances to the limit of its credibility, Raabe ensures, whether deliberately or unintentionally, that Schaumann's achievement remains subjective; however impressive it may be in this particular case, its application does not extend beyond the individual and the unique - of itself it has no exemplary value. On this level too we see, therefore, that any interpretation based on Schaumann as an exemplary, ideal hero has many grave difficulties to overcome.

In the course of my present argument I have attempted to convey, by an examination of some aspects of the characterisation and motifs of Stopfkuchen, my own understanding of that novel and in particular my feelings concerning the balance of forces within it. The time has now come to try to draw together some of the threads of that argument and to see where it leads us in terms of the wider question of Raabe's over-all attitude to the problem of reality and illusion.

To this end, I suggest that Stopfkuchen is basically a work of contrasts. It presents, for example, a well-documented contrast in time, with the reader's attention focussed alternately on several different time-levels (narrative time; Eduard's visit to his home town; Eduard's and Schaumann's childhood; the period of the Seven Years' War; and prehistoric times) and sometimes on several at once; in addition, spatial contrasts abound, with varying emphasis on the characters' changing relationship to the different experienced and remembered milieux (the small town; the ship; the Rote Schanze; and the South African veld). These two sets of

contrasts are important in themselves, but their main contribution lies in their relationship to the third contrast, that of characterisation which, although it is both widened and deepened through the action of the others, represents the central contrast of the novel. Here the contrast obviously concerns the relationship of Schaumann to the local community and to Eduard, and the continuing tension between these two spheres forces the reader, as it were, to look in two different directions at the same time or at least, while his attention is drawn to one side, to have, as it were, half an eye open for the importance of the other: on the one hand he is confronted by Raabe's gleeful and ruthless unmasking of dearly held social attitudes and prejudices, and on the other he is asked to consider an alternative to the way of life represented by the townspeople. I have tried to show that these separate aspects are not entirely complementary, that they are not, so to speak, opposite sides of the same coin. It is true that Raabe's unmasking of social prejudices is brilliantly successful, partly, I think, because



of the slow pace and moderate language of the narrative:<sup>52</sup> there is no trace here of the exaggerated, indignant rhetoric which characterised some of his earlier indictments of social wrongs, such as Die Chronik der Sperlingsgasse, 1855 (in parts), Ein Frühling (1857), Der Hungerpastor (1863), even Abu Telfan (1867) and Der Schüdderump (1869). In addition the twofold perspective of Schaumann and Eduard gradually builds up the impression of a dense but totally convincing pattern. Nevertheless, as I have tried to demonstrate, I feel the presentation of the alternative is by no means as positive and unqualified as has often been assumed. In the first place, it is clear from Raabe's statements that the novel was intended not as a didactic work of general application but, to some degree at least, as a literary and creative comment on his own life and situation; in this respect its application, and therefore the validity of the hero's way of life, is subjective, personal, individual. Indeed, the exclusively subjective validity of

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52 The impression of slow deliberation is intensified by, among other things, Schaumann's frequent use of nouns to clarify grammatically ambiguous pronouns, for example: „Es hatte sich im Hause auch ein alter Schmöcker erhalten. Meine Mutter hat ihn jahrelang benutzt, um einem wackelnden Schrank den mangelnden vierten Fuß unterzuschieben. Der half mir weiter. Nicht der Schrank, sondern der Schmöcker!“ (B.A. 18/69), and again: „Der, dem ich die Höflichkeit hatte erweisen wollen, war unter das Volk, das heißt unter die Weiber und Kinder zurückgewichen und hatte sie, meine Höflichkeit meine ich, wahrscheinlich nicht bemerkt.“ (B.A. 18/174) It is also explicitly justified by Schaumann's exhortation - delivered immediately after the revelation that he knows the true identity of the murderer - to Tinochen and Eduard to have patience and hear the story out quietly: „Aber - Kinder - so - laßt mich doch - die Geschichte von der völligen Eroberung von Quakatzenburg in Ruhe erzählen, wenn ihr sie wissen wollt. Unterbrecht mich doch nicht immer! Diese ewige Aufgeregtheit in der jedesmaligen, eben vorhandenen Menschheit, bis sie sich hinlegt und tot ist! Fallt mir doch nicht bei jedem dritten Worte ins Wort, wenn wir bis zum Abendessen mit der Sache fertig sein sollen.“ (B.A. 18/94)

Schaumann's way of life is also strongly implied within the novel itself, in the striking fact that his marriage remains childless; his solution is not even passed down through his own family, far less recommended as a model for imitation by others.<sup>53</sup> In addition, although in the figure of Schaumann Raabe came nearer than ever before to portraying in a convincing manner the synthesis of the principles of truth and humanity in one character, there is no question but that Schaumann's solution too must remain ultimately provisional: not only are his abilities and insights not tested to their utmost, as is evident in Raabe's manipulation of the sequence of events; he also shows characteristics which demonstrate the extreme fragility of his present situation and the ever-present danger of a slide into philistine self-satisfaction and smugness. I submit that in all of this Raabe shows himself to be a realist in the widest sense of the term. He is aware that a totally positive character would have been not only unconvincing but also inherently false and it is for this reason that, by indicating personal weaknesses and emphasising the importance of chance combinations of circumstances, he hedges Schaumann's predominantly positive characterisation around with doubts and qualifications. He goes no

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53 This point is also made by Pascal (The German Novel, p.159) and by Detroy (op.cit., p.107, Note 152). I do not, of course, want to suggest that Raabe intends the merit of his characters to be judged by the amount of children they produce; Eduard, for example, has a healthy family but is obviously not thereby meant to be seen as superior to Schaumann. Nevertheless there is a clearly deliberate contrast here, which operates to Schaumann's disadvantage. Indeed, the whole question of Raabe's view of the family (for in his works incomplete or broken families are much more common than whole or harmonious ones) is one which is still in need of systematic clarification. For a detailed list of family units in Raabe's novels, see Appendix B of this study.



farther than to suggest a possible solution for a particular type of person in a certain situation, and even there the solution is, at least by implication, provisional; and in view of the fact that Schaumann is undoubtedly, within the terms of this study, Raabe's most convincingly positive character, we must of necessity conclude that the search for the synthesis can, according to Raabe, never be totally successful: because of man's finite nature, no individual can ever hope realistically to attain the pinnacle of perception. This, as we have seen, is suggested strongly by the motif of the „Urtiere" and the „Mammutsgewölbe"; it is one of the basic insights of Raabe's mature creativity and one which finds repeated expression in Stopfkuchen. Over and above this, Raabe's subtle deployment of different time-levels points to an acute awareness of the transience or, to use a less pessimistic term, the dynamism of life: the constant switching from one period to another reminds us not only of the vastness of time but also of the irreversible changes which, inevitably, it occasions. (The same is true, in general terms, of the effect of the particular time-structure in Das Odfeld, 1887).<sup>54</sup> Again, the essentially provisional nature of any human insight generated by such a situation is clearly implied in the qualifications attaching to the characterisation of Schaumann; in Stopfkuchen we have, in fact, a complete negation of the notion of static truth implied in the Bildungsroman. In some ways this novel operates on a different level from the exploratory searchings of some of Raabe's earlier - and, for that matter, later - works, but essentially its foundation is the same. It encompasses a search

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54. In this respect, Killy's study of Das Odfeld is particularly illuminating.

after truth and offers certain tentative conclusions as to how that goal might best be striven after, but ultimately it is the questions rather than the answers, which assert themselves most strongly, it is the doubts and qualifications rather than the clear-cut certainties, which stick in the mind of the reader. In Stopfkuchen (1889), as in Unruhige Gäste (1884), the reader is all too often uneasily aware of what Brill has described as "Raabe's deep feeling for the strangeness of life, with its irony, menacing undertones, and mutability."<sup>55</sup> Here as elsewhere Raabe cannot and will not depart from his own deeply held conviction that while the notion of perfect truth may serve as an ideal against which we may usefully attempt to measure our own level of insight and perception, it is not something which, in practice, we can realistically attain. At the end of the day there is no fusion of vision with reality, only a continuing and ennobling but never-ending quest for the impossible.

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<sup>55</sup> Brill, op.cit., p.33.



#### SECTION FOUR - CONCLUSION

As I indicated at an earlier stage, I have tried above all in the course of this study to answer two questions which, it seemed to me, ought to figure pre-eminently in any investigation of the artistic portrayal of the problems of reality, illusion and perception:<sup>1</sup> I have dealt first of all with what appeared to me to represent the most important areas of illusion, self-deception and misunderstanding depicted in Raabe's mature fiction and have, secondly, gone on from there to examine Raabe's attitude to and possible literary representation of the notion of absolute truth. The time has now come to enquire whether the various insights suggested earlier can be gathered together into some sort of coherent statement.

As far as Raabe's attitude to the problem of absolute truth is concerned, it is, I think, clear that we are confronted here with a situation of increasingly acute tension between on the one hand the desire to affirm the possibility, on an individual level, of its attainment and on the other the constantly growing realisation that such a thing is, in practical terms, impossible of achievement. As I suggested in the previous Chapter, Raabe demonstrates a gradual but progressive and ultimately irreversible development in this respect:<sup>2</sup> the apparent assumption, embodied in some of his earlier novels, both that there is indeed such a thing as absolute truth and that it can be encompassed in individual human terms gives way slowly to an

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1 See pages 1 -1 of this study.

2 See pp.272-77 of this study.

ever more persistent questioning which leads him first of all towards a position of hesitant agnosticism (implied, for example, in the rather obscure and ambiguous characterisation of the Ritter von Glaubigern in Der Schüdderump, 1869) and finally to the reluctant but complete rejection, in his later works, of the standpoint he had once maintained with such blithe optimism. The crisis-point in this development is reached with the composition of Stopfkuchen (1889). We have already seen how various aspects of that novel, notably the negative qualifications attaching to the characterisation of the central figure, the ambiguity of most of the central motifs (and in particular of the „Urtiere“-motif), Schaumann's own childlessness and Raabe's manipulation of the sequence of events combine to make of it something quite different from the gleeful apotheosis of the outsider which it has sometimes been said to reflect.<sup>3</sup> The immediate brilliance of Schaumann's achievement is dulled by the more sombre hues of finiteness, transience and isolation; far from being merely a humorous allegory of Raabe's own road to artistic mastery, it is a novel whose implications, if not its atmosphere, are solemn and sobering, a novel which stresses not the sovereign autonomy of the individual but the limitations of his capacities and the subjectivity of his all too human point of view. Its humour is born of melancholy, and its apparent optimism barely conceals the underlying resignation at the heart of the book. In a sense, Stopfkuchen represents both a culmination and a turning-point in Raabe's life-long preoccupation with the notion of absolute truth. Here, in his "truly subjective

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3 See Section III of this study, especially pp. 298-324.



book"<sup>4</sup> (in autobiographical terms possibly the most revealing of all his novels), the tension informing almost all of his previous work is finally resolved, albeit reluctantly and in such a fashion as to veil in large measure the true significance of what he has to say. Underneath the layers of concealment and mystification there are sufficient indications for the painstaking reader that Raabe is well on the way towards acceptance of the view that in human terms the search for complete self-fulfilment and sovereignty of perception is and will always remain inevitably fruitless. And when we consider the most important of his remaining works, it becomes clear that by the end of his literary career he had, in fact, made this view entirely his own: his final position is illustrated clearly - and much more emphatically - in Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) and Altershausen (1902), where the reluctant suggestions of Stopfkuchen (1889) now bear the stamp of full conviction. These two novels are, as we have already seen, not rounded off but open-ended; they provide us not with answers but with questions; their major figures do not radiate certainty but are, rather, consumed by doubt; and the view of the world illustrated in them is distinguished not by clarity but by ambiguity.<sup>5</sup> In these the most mature productions of his old age, Raabe presents the world no longer as a firmly established independent entity whose essence can be grasped objectively if only enough of the relevant facts are known, but as a continuously variable subjective experience whose reality, in human

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4 See Raabe's letter of 17.11.1890 to Paul Gerber, quoted on p.296 of this study, Note 26.

5 See especially pp.44-77, 195-97 and 246-51 of this study.

terms, changes with our perception of it. We can, in other words, appreciate it only insofar as the limitations of our senses and historical situation allow. One of the fundamental lessons of his mature work is, in fact, the conviction that a state of not knowing, of (anything but blissful) ignorance, is the normal and unchallengeable condition of humanity. For Raabe the world is not the solid, firmly established centre of the universe which the pre-Copernican astronomers - and not only they - believed it to be, but rather the "unsettled Earth" alluded to in the desolate quotation in which Velten Andres seeks refuge after the collapse of his personal world can no longer be denied.<sup>6</sup>

The view of the world as a place whose nature, purpose and development are ultimately beyond individual human comprehension is, then, at the very heart of Raabe's mature fiction. As we have seen, it bursts out into the open and is taken up as one of the very few unalterable truths only towards the end of his creative life, but it is nevertheless traceable from the early stages of his literary career. When we reflect, for example, on the various sources of illusion and misunderstanding dealt with earlier, we must surely find it striking that such a comprehensive variety of individual

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<sup>6</sup> This sense of crumbling insecurity emerges just as clearly from Raabe's (quite voluminous) correspondence as it does from his fictional writing. See, for example, his letters of 1.9.1877 to Wilhelm and Marie Jensen (B.A., *Ergänzungsband* 3, pp.278-280), of 4.7.1881 to Eduard Engel (*Erg.-bd.* 2, pp.230-31), of 12.2.1883 to Friedrich Notter (*Erg.-bd.* 2, pp.240-41), of 7.5.1890 to Edmund Sträter (*Erg.-bd.* 2, p.280) and of 30.12.1907 to Karl Schönhardt (*Erg.-bd.* 2, pp.476-77). Most revealing of all, perhaps, is the quotation (from *Unruhige Gäste*, 1884) with which Raabe prefaced the printed expressions of thanks sent to well-wishers who had written to him or sent telegrams on the occasion of his seventieth birthday: "Was sind wir Alle anders als Boten, die versiegelte Gaben zu unbekannten Leuten tragen?" (*Erg.-bd.* 2, p.433).



attitudes and modes of behaviour leads in each case virtually to the same result - a blurring of vision, a distortion of view, and a decreased ability to form reliable judgments about the world, one's own position within it and one's relationships to other people. This suggests that the individual "escapes" should be regarded not in themselves as prime causes of illusion but rather as particular and immediate manifestations of a much wider, indeed all-embracing condition. The source of man's incomprehension is not social or behavioural but ontological: there is, in other words, something in the very nature of creation which effectively obstructs man's attempts to impose on it a pattern capable of human understanding and to make use of that pattern as a guideline in daily life.

On a less general level, this essentially pessimistic view of the world is implied also in the significantly high proportion of incomplete or broken family units which populate Raabe's writings almost uninterruptedly from the orphaned Gustav Berg and Elise Ralff of Die Chronik der Sperlingsgasse (1855) to the widowed and childless Fritz Feyerabend of Altershausen (1902); less than one third of the families presented in his work as a whole can, in fact, be reckoned complete in numerical terms.<sup>7</sup> In one sense, of course, this can be at least partially accounted for by the comparatively low life expectancy of the time - and Raabe himself, having experienced the tragic and untimely deaths both of his father and of his youngest daughter, was no stranger to this aspect of life in the nineteenth century - but its significance extends beyond the

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7 A detailed list of significant whole and incomplete family units will be found in Appendix B of this study.

desire for statistical correspondence between fiction and reality. The number and nature of incomplete or broken families is one indication among many that Raabe was only too painfully aware of the fact that life seldom follows a comfortable or predictable pattern; it is full of incalculable and often unforeseen events - such as a sudden and unexpected death - which attack and destroy the harmonious model which man has attempted to establish as his right. In the face of such uncontrollable and often apparently capricious events, man has in the end to resign himself to a position of virtual ignorance and, consequently, of total impotence.

Raabe's increasing scepticism regarding the possibility of complete self-knowledge is, then, implied at least indirectly, in the fragmentary composition of most of the families he portrays. It emerges, as we have seen, in many other guises too, notably in the developments attaching to his treatment of the journey as a process of education and enlightenment,<sup>8</sup> but it is seen possibly in its most intense and convincing form in the increasingly frequent use he makes of personalised narrators. Although fully characterised first-person narrators are to be found here and there throughout Raabe's work (and one need think only of Johannes Wacholder of Die Chronik der Sperlingsgasse (1855), Max Bösenberg of Die Kinder von Finkenrode (1858) and the three co-narrators of Drei Federn (1865) to appreciate the use made of them in early novels), the peculiar possibilities they offer are not fully exploited until the later stages of his career.<sup>9</sup> Whereas Raabe seems to have envisaged the

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8 See Section III of this study, especially pp.304-7 and Note 35.

9 See Chapter II, 3 of this study, especially p.148, Note 10.



early narrators chiefly as useful tools in the authentication of his tale, the first-person narrators of the later novels, from around the time of Meister Autor (1873) onwards (and here one thinks in particular of Herr von Schmidt (Meister Autor), Fritz Langreuter (Alte Nester 1879), Eduard (Stopfkuchen 1889), Karl Krumhardt (Die Akten des Vogelsangs 1895) and Fritz Feyerabend (Altershausen 1902), fulfil a quite separate and much more significant function: they act as indicators of the loneliness and insecurity of the individual, and of the subjectivity, incompleteness and unreliability of his view of the world. What these narrators have to say tells us, in many ways, more about themselves than about the object of their comments, more about how they themselves see the world than about what it is actually like.<sup>10</sup> They represent a complete renunciation of the author's right of omniscience, and the increasing frequency of their appearance reflects in formal terms Raabe's ever more explicit awareness of the incalculability of life. The gradual emergence and eventual dominance of the fully characterised subjective narrator seem to suggest a deep-seated feeling of unease slowly working itself to the surface of Raabe's consciousness and latterly establishing itself as the most characteristic feature of his mature fiction. As Raabe in each successive novel penetrates closer and closer to the centre of the problem, as each time he strips away (to use one of his own favourite metaphors) another piece of protective and deceptive foliage from the tree of life, so the awareness of drifting insecurity ultimately asserts itself (in

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10 An illustration of this characteristic feature of Raabe's later personalised narrators is given on pp. 301-4 of this study, through the example of Eduard (Stopfkuchen, 1889).

formal terms through the choice of an unheroic but personalised narrator) as virtually the most important single aspect of his writing. In this he points forward ever more firmly towards the preoccupations and obsessions of the twentieth century with an insistence which most of his contemporaries, for all their outward similarities of theme and form, cannot muster.<sup>11</sup> Here, as much as in any other facet of his work, lies the source of the "modernity" whose analysis has become so fashionable since it was first recognised by Barker Fairley over twenty years ago.<sup>12</sup>

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11 With Theodor Storm, for example, the development in narrative technique is in the opposite direction: in his earlier works Storm makes prolific use of framework techniques and of personalised subjective narrators, but from 1877 until his death he restricts himself almost exclusively to the traditional omniscient, usually third-person narrator. (cf. T.J. Rogers: Techniques of Solipsism. A Study of Theodor Storm's Narrative Fiction, Cambridge, 1970, pp.45-61. Later in his study Rogers draws explicitly the conclusion implied in this formal development when he states that "late in his life and late in his writing, Storm more frequently achieves a measure of certainty about the existence of the world beyond his own sensibility; that world assumes an independence and force which impinge upon him ever more urgently and reassuringly; turning outwards, he is able to grasp and be supported by its reality." Nevertheless, Storm's search for certainty is only partially successful; he achieves only "an anxiously provisional answer." (Rogers, op.cit., pp.152-153)). From this analysis it would seem that whereas with Raabe we are confronted with a consistent and progressive development from certainty to doubt and isolation, Storm starts from a state of extreme solipsism and gradually gropes his way towards a position of relative security.

12 Barker Fairley: "The Modernity of Wilhelm Raabe" in German Studies presented to Leonard Ashley Willoughby, Oxford, 1952, pp.66-81. Virtually the first critic to recognise Raabe's technical versatility as a carefully planned process rather than the reflection of stylistic and structural inadequacy, Fairley includes among his main points an emphasis on "the immersing of everything in everything else" in Raabe's mature fiction (p.68), a suggestion that Raabe offers "what is psychologically the most richly conceived body of fiction in the German language" (p.73) and an insistence that once critical attention is focussed on the later, and not the earlier novels, Raabe will come to be recognised "as a modern novelist, indeed almost a contemporary, of uncanny skill and penetration." (p.81) Twenty years later it goes without saying that Fairley's observations have in the meantime been vindicated entirely.



In this respect it certainly seems as if Raabe were to some degree running ahead of his times, but it would, nevertheless, be misleading to think of him, even in terms of his appreciation of human insecurity and isolation, as a twentieth-century spirit born out of his age, for alongside his heightened awareness of these aspects of existence we have to set what might accurately be termed his reserved belief in an underlying though from the human point of view undiscernible pattern to life. He sees the world as incomprehensible, but not as absurd; the tree of life on which Velten Andres (among many others) becomes hopelessly stranded is not the wilful agglomeration of disconnected branches which he takes it to be, but an organic body with a meaningful pattern of growth, a pattern, which, to be sure, is hidden from the lonely individual stranded on one of the outlying limbs, but which, nevertheless, exists and determines the shape of events and relationships in a mysterious but purposeful fashion. A brief glance at the multifarious images used by Raabe in his later works to circumscribe his understanding of the motive force behind the world may help to illustrate his position in this regard: he employs a number of phrases, each of which implies a degree of trust in the rationality of creation - das Schicksal, die Götter, der Baum des Lebens and (most frequently of all) der Zusammenhang der Dinge - but seems unable to settle finally on any one term; his inability to hold to one term as an adequate characterisation of the force he is attempting to describe reflects his ultimate bewilderment in the face of his own subjectivity and the vast complexity of the world, but the general atmosphere attaching to each of the terms used suggests strongly at least a reserved or residual belief in a

rational if not necessarily beneficent force responsible for the creation and sustenance of life as we know it. The search for some sort of synthesis between experience and speculation, between life and the comprehension of life is just as important in Raabe's mature fiction as the sense of isolation and insecurity which it also undoubtedly expresses; it is not without reason that Hermann Pongs' examination of several of Raabe's finest novels is conducted under the headings "Werke um den Zusammenhang der Dinge", "der religiöse Zusammenhang" and "Werke um den mystischen Zusammenhang der Dinge."<sup>13</sup>

The search for coherence and for a visible purpose to life may, therefore, be vain, but it is not pointless. For Raabe there is a purpose to life and a pattern to creation, however incomprehensible these may seem; and the very search after understanding, as well as the element of faith on which that search is founded, lend those who pursue it honestly a strength and dignity which they could not otherwise achieve. It is this residual belief in a cosmic order, this reserved faith in the ultimate rationality of things which at the end of the day sets Raabe apart from the more thoroughgoing metaphysical and literary anarchy of the twentieth century.

Just how deeply this essentially traditional attitude influences the whole tenor of Raabe's work can be gauged from a comparison of the atmosphere of Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) (generally

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<sup>13</sup> Pongs: Wilhelm Raabe.... Under the heading "Werke um den Zusammenhang der Dinge", Pongs deals with Alte Nester (1879), Das Horn von Wanza (1880), Fabian und Sebastian (1881), Prinzessin Fisch (1882), Villa Schönow (1883) and Pfisters Mühle (1884). Unruhige Gäste (1884) is discussed under the heading "der religiöse Zusammenhang", while Im alten Eisen (1886), Das Odfeld (1887), Der Lar (1888) and Stopfkuchen (1889) are grouped together as "Werke um den mystischen Zusammenhang der Dinge." (See Pongs, pp.447-574).



considered to be the most sombrely pessimistic of all his novels) with that of Thomas Mann's Buddenbrooks, published only five years later, and the product of a young man with his whole life ahead of him. In several important respects the two novels deal with similar problems, and their central characters are confronted with similar dilemmas. Karl Krumhardt, for example, has to come to terms with many of the difficulties faced by Thomas Buddenbrook: he too has to weigh the claims of conformity against those of individualism, of the intellect against intuition, of the values of society against the temptations of art. Despite the fact that in his case one side of the dilemma is presented, so to speak, externally (in that the lures of the individualist, intuitive, asocial outlook do not reside in his own personality but are incorporated at one remove, in the figure of Velten Andres), Krumhardt, as a man of honesty and good conscience, is just as painfully aware of the incompatibility and potential destructiveness of the opposing forces at work on him as is Thomas Buddenbrook. In spite of this basic affinity of theme, however, the two novels present a quite separate and distinctive feeling for life. Perhaps naively, or perhaps in the light of his (at that time) much greater experience of life, Raabe does not go nearly so far as Mann in one crucial respect: in spite of the emphasis he places on forces which hem the individual in and restrict his freedom of action,<sup>14</sup> his characters are never - even in this particularly desolate novel - reduced to the status of puppets whose lives amount to little more than a series of reactions programmed in advance by the chance combinations of inherited and

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14 See Chapter II, 4 of this study, especially pp. 248-51 and Notes 51 and 81.

environmental factors. The value of the individual personality is never called in question in even remotely similar fashion to that suggested by Thomas Buddenbrook's encounter with the doctrines of Schopenhauer, and despite his recurring feelings of impotence and unease, Krumhardt is never gripped, as Thomas Buddenbrook eventually is, by an overwhelming sensation of empty purposelessness or by the conviction that life represents an unending series of pointless performances played out in front of an equally weary and indifferent public;<sup>15</sup> and there is, I think, nothing in the whole of Raabe's writing quite so chilling and melancholy as the final scene of Buddenbrooks where, with the virtual extinction of the whole Buddenbrook family, Gerda prepares to return to her aged father in Amsterdam, leaving behind her a life which even now appears to have

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15 It is, of course, true that Krumhardt himself at one point presents us with an extended metaphor identifying life with a play and the world with a stage (B.A. 19/333-34), but both the context of his remarks and the details of the metaphor suggest rather a different view of life from that which Mann illustrates through the figure of Thomas Buddenbrook. Krumhardt's metaphor is in essence a meditation on the individual's disinclination to question the basis and purpose of his existence, and on the often unpleasant consequences which occur on the rare occasions when he does take that step. He assumes the existence of some sort of rational and purposeful force behind life (this is implicit in his reference to the "director") and is concerned with the discrepancy between our perception of the reality of day-by-day life, and the underlying nature of existence, which we seldom, if ever, attempt to come to terms with. This is by no means as bleak and pessimistic an attitude as that implied in the development of Thomas Buddenbrook, namely that life is merely a facade with nothing of lasting substance behind the wearily constructed but illusory scenario of props and decor.



been little more than a depressing fiction. The difference in tone between the two novels is unmistakable, and it is without doubt Raabe's residual belief in an essentially ordered though apparently incomprehensible world which saves him from the radical pessimism of Thomas Mann and those who followed in his wake. Ultimately Raabe's world is not that of Mann, far less that of Kafka, Camus or Sartre. He shares with these writers the basic experience of insecurity and isolation, but balances this constantly with the feeling for an underlying coherence and purposefulness to life. In this extremely important respect he is very much a transitional figure, fully representative neither of his own generation, with its general disinclination to question too deeply the validity of the experienced, tangible world, nor of the following one, with its despondent disbelief in even the most attenuated concept of providential force.

The enduring equilibrium sustained in Raabe's mature writing between on the one hand the sense of human isolation and on the other the belief in some sort of rational force creating and sustaining life is, I believe, the very mainspring of his creativity, the basic situation to which he addresses himself repeatedly and from many different points of view. It is the ultimate factor on which the diverse phenomena we looked at in Section II of this study, the various "escapes from reality", all depend, and it is, therefore, not surprising that we can detect in the depiction of these individual aspects reflections of the more general tension governing the underlying principle. Thus, as we saw earlier, Raabe sustains on the narrower stage a similar tension between the principle of truth, the urge to reveal, and the principle of

humanity, the need to conceal. Here, however, there is some evidence of a movement towards one of the poles at the expense of the other: in the last few years of his literary activity Raabe seems rather more willing to assert the principle of truth and to give rather less weight than he had done previously to the counter-balancing principle of humanity. We saw, for example, how the particular narrative position chosen for Karl Krumhardt allows a more convincing and profound criticism of social values to emerge than was possible in the more crudely satirical yet strangely indecisive Abu Telfan (1867); a similar development was shown to apply also to Raabe's portrayal of the imaginative outsider, in that the fragile balance between imagination and reality, whose viability and desirability had been implied in both Wunnigel (1876) and Deutscher Adel (1877), is demonstrated in the later Die Akten des Vogelsangs (1895) to have been little more than wishful thinking; and our examination of his depiction of the escape into memory also indicated a hardening of attitude in favour of stern realism between the composition of Alte Nester (1879) and the completion of Altershausen (1902).<sup>16</sup> In all of these cases the qualifications and doubts, the tentativeness and hesitation which characterise many of the novels of the 1870s, and even of the 1880s, are to some degree overtaken by the more uncompromising attitudes of the last decade or so of Raabe's creative life. Despite the fact that in these last years Raabe also comes to accept more and more the existence of constricting forces, both external and internal, limiting the individual's freedom of action and inhibiting the free

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16 See pp.50-52; 75-77; 138-39; and 195-97 of this study.



development of his capabilities,<sup>17</sup> it does seem, on the balance of evidence available, that towards the end of his life he had come to doubt the lasting value of humanitarian illusion, that he was on the way to accepting the position of the "sweeper" and discarding the temptations of the "tailor". It is, indeed, arguable that in both literary and philosophical terms the ethical element tends to dominate increasingly at the expense of the analytical,<sup>18</sup> reflecting, no doubt a growing desire on the part of Raabe to assert and maintain certain standards as anchors with which to resist what he saw as the progressive social and personal disintegration resulting from the new materialism of the Gründerjahre and the disappearance of traditional community values.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, we are not dealing here with the total affirmation of one principle or the utter rejection of the other. Such a conclusion would be far too

17 See p.340 above, Note 14.

18 The ethical element is, of course, important throughout the whole of Raabe's writing; it is, for instance, implicit in the "principle of truth", which plays a part in his view of things from the very beginning, and Raabe was doing no less than express one of the major preoccupations of his vocation when he wrote to Adolf Glaser: "Es ist viel Lüge in unserer Litteratur, und ich werde auch für mein armes Theil nach Kräften das Meinige dazu tun, sie herauszubringen, ...." (Letter of February, 1866, B.A., Erg-bd. 2, p.112; cf. also Appendix A of this study, pp.373-74). The ethical element does not, however, come to dominate his work until the last decade or so of his creative life.

19 This process, which certainly applies in the case of Raabe, is seen by Prof. J.M. Ritchie as characteristic of German Realism as a whole: "Essentially at the heart of the matter is the isolated individual attempting to find coherence and order (Zusammenhang der Dinge) in the, for him, apparently increasing chaos of the modern world. For this he turned to what still seemed the constant, enduring values to be found in nature, the people, well-known and well-loved geographical areas, historical tales, cultural traditions, social and ethical values etc.." (Ritchie: Periods in German Literature, vol.1, pp.177-78).

sweeping; it is not a question of a complete commitment to one or other aspect, but rather of a shift of emphasis, which, if Raabe had continued to write between 1902 and 1910, might conceivably have been reversed.<sup>20</sup> The development I have just described is in itself a tentative one; it is by no means explicit and in no way can it be said to nullify the continuing tension sustained by Raabe between the urge to enlighten and the desire to protect. It is this tension, and the delicate balance, indeed one might say the enduring ambivalence, resulting from it which most aptly characterise the representative productions of Raabe's mature fiction. At the close of forty-eight years' literary activity he is still not willing to trade in certainties and dogmas but offers rather a series of insights whose over-all balance, relationships and applicability the reader must determine for himself. Raabe is willing to share his understanding of the world with others; what he is not prepared to do is to pretend that he, or, for that matter, anyone else, can present it in terms sufficiently comprehensive to allow him to speak of an objective representation of

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20 cf. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz's similar suggestion, quoted on pp.9-10 of this study.



reality.<sup>21</sup> In this respect his ambition is inevitably tempered by the constant realisation of his own subjectivity.

What, then, is Raabe's achievement? What is the value of almost fifty years' constant preoccupation with questions of reality and illusion and with problems of human perception? Would the world have been any the poorer if, instead of following the vocation he did, Raabe had, as was by no means inconceivable, become instead a mediocre lawyer, teacher, doctor or even clergyman?<sup>22</sup> It seems to

21 Just how far removed Raabe is in this respect from more popular ideas and practices of his time is clear from a consideration of Spielhagen's concept of "epische" or "extensive Totalität", and his attempt to construct within a literary context an "objective picture of the world". Spielhagen holds that the object of literature "nichts Geringeres (ist) als die Welt und somit das - gleichviel ob ihm bewußte oder unbewußte - Streben des epischen Dichters, ... ein Weltbild zu geben." (Friedrich Spielhagen: Beiträge zur Theorie und Technik des Romans, Leipzig, 1883, p.153, quoted in Günter Rebing: Der Halbbruder des Dichters. Friedrich Spielhagens Theorie des Romans, Frankfurt am Main, 1972, pp.83-84). In practical terms this largely positivist view amounts to little more than a demand for the maximum possible number and variety of facts and impressions to be integrated together in a work of art in order that a suitably and faithfully chaotic reflection of the real world may emerge. cf. Rebing's comment: "„Weltbild' ist hier ganz überwiegend im materiellen Sinn verstanden; entsprechend bedeutet auch Totalität bei Spielhagen kaum mehr als eine Mengenangabe." (Rebing, op.cit., p.84. Spielhagen's understanding of "epische Totalität" appears repeatedly in Rebing's study but is dealt with most directly on pp.81-86). In the light of this it is easy to understand the reasons for Raabe's almost contemptuous rejection of Spielhagen's description of his vocation as that of a "Dichter-Journalist." (Letter of 2.3.1875 to Paul Heyse, B.A., Erg.-bd. 2, p.183).

22 That this was by no means as outrageous a thought as it might appear nowadays is clear from a letter of 9.8.1906 to Herr Müller-Brauel (editor of the periodical Heidjer), in which, speaking of his years as an apprentice bookseller in Magdeburg, Raabe comments: "Wie mich danach Unseres Herrgotts Kanzlei, die brave Stadt Magdeburg, davor bewahrte, ein mittelmäßiger Jurist, Schulmeister, Arzt oder gar Pastor zu werden, halte ich für eine Fügung, für welche ich nicht dankbar genug sein kann." (B.A., Erg.-bd. 2, p.467)

me that his work, or at least that enduring segment of it which I have concentrated on in this study, represents not only a notable contribution to the corpus of prose writing of his day but also a valuable interpretative comment on many vital aspects of life in the middle and later nineteenth century. It is certainly true that he lacks the sheer breadth of the great Russian novelists and that his field of vision in social terms is rather restricted when compared with that of his English and French contemporaries. These are criticisms which have been levelled at Raabe on many occasions in the past, and in their own terms they carry a measure of justification, but I do not think that in themselves they are sufficiently weighty to relegate him to the status of a minor provincial writer, as certain critics have attempted to do.<sup>23</sup> He brings, after all, a high degree of technical skill, psychological insight and human integrity to bear on the vital questions to which he returns again and again in the course of a lifetime's reflection, consideration and creative expression. In comparison with certain other writers, his

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23 of. Lukacs, who argues that Raabe's pronounced "Innerlichkeit" brings with it "eine bestimmte Enge und Muffigkeit" in his portrayal of the world. Because of the narrow basis of his social criticism, Lukacs relegates Raabe to a position decidedly inferior to that which he is willing to allocate to Dickens or Keller. (Lukacs, op.cit., pp.253-54). Pascal, taking a largely similar point of view, concludes that despite his undoubted integrity, Raabe must, by virtue of his narrow social range, and lack of intellectual insight or energy of passion, be ranked a minor writer. (Pascal: The German Novel, p.173). More surprisingly, perhaps, in view of the widespread reassessment of Raabe's achievement, Alex Natan, in an introduction to a fairly recent survey of nineteenth-century German literature refers rather curiously to a "predilection for didactic digressions which has always blocked the way to Raabe and which has so much contributed to him being accounted a minor writer, just because he curiously failed to come to grips with his time." (German Men of Letters, vol.5, London, 1969, p.23).



range is certainly restricted, but it is at least arguable that this restriction has proved in his case to be a fruitful one. His novels are all the more valuable and their analysis of the human condition all the more penetrating by reason of their generally having grown out of an age, environment and social grouping which Raabe himself knew intimately. The questions he asks are the eternal ones which, as I suggested in the introduction to this study, occupy the sensitive spirits of every age;<sup>24</sup> the circumscribed medium of their presentation is, however, both in literary and in personal terms, highly appropriate. It allows Raabe, as Hubert Ohl has argued, to analyse the central dilemma of the later nineteenth century perhaps more profoundly and effectively than any of his contemporaries;<sup>25</sup> and although it is not always prudent to judge an author according to the criteria of current critical fashion, the considerable upsurge, over the past twenty years, of academic and scholarly interest in all aspects of Raabe's creativity seems to suggest that, for the present generation at least, Raabe is coming to be accepted as a writer who had a valuable contribution to make and who could make it in a satisfying and convincing fashion. It is indeed ironic that a writer whose interest centred so firmly on the problems of his own age and yet who enjoyed so little attention during his own lifetime should appeal so much more powerfully in the vastly changed circumstances which prevail three-quarters of a century after the publication of his last completed novel. Raabe illustrates in a peculiarly pregnant manner

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24 See p.2 of this study.

25 Ohl: „Eduards Heimkehr...“, pp.278-79.

the truth of J.P. Stern's description of what he sees as "the most characteristic works of nineteenth-century German prose" - "They are almost always behind their times, and often peculiarly relevant to ours."<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the most accurate characterisation of his achievement is to be found, however, in one of Raabe's own self-descriptive observations. In a letter to the Berlin banker Siegmund Schott, written on August 12th, 1895 (less than a month after the completion of Die Akten des Vogelsangs), he concludes thus: „Man hat doch an mancher schönen Insel Anker geworfen, wenn man auch gerade nicht neue Welttheile entdeckt hat!"<sup>27</sup> There are few indeed whose achievement is of a higher order than that.

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26 J.P. Stern: Re-interpretations. Seven Studies in Nineteenth-Century German Literature, London, 1964, p.2. Stern gives his reasons for excluding Raabe (among others) from the scope of his study on p.302.

27 B.A., Erg.-bd. 2, p.370.



APPENDIX A: RAABE'S PORTRAYAL OF MENTAL ABNORMALITY

It might seem at first sight that the concept and portrayal of mental abnormality would of necessity constitute an important, even a basic element in the work of a writer so compulsively interested as Raabe undoubtedly is in the constantly shifting balance between the potential and the frailty of human perception. It must therefore be a source of some surprise that in fact it occupies a comparatively insignificant position when measured against the recurrent preoccupations of his work as a whole. I hope to suggest one or two reasons for this rather unexpected state of affairs in the course of this discussion, but whatever explanation or explanations might be offered, it is clear that Raabe is much less interested in mental abnormality as such than in other, seemingly less obvious factors making for illusions and misconceptions, factors which have been investigated at different points in this study (reliance on the conventional wisdom of the social group; retreat into imaginative and personal fantasies; escape into the world of memory and reminiscence; reduction of life to a single principle). He is interested primarily in attitudes and relationships rather than in self-contained conditions, and mental case-histories are in themselves of no great literary importance for him.

There are, I suppose, two basically different methods of critical approach to the literary treatment of mental abnormality. On the one hand, one can apply medical or psychiatric criteria to the presentation of individual characters, attempt a retrospective diagnosis and, if possible, proceed from there to the formulation of wider conclusions. On the other hand one can admit that in terms of

medical knowledge and expertise the author himself is in all probability a mere layman, treat the whole subject from an unashamedly lay point of view, and deal with it on an entirely literary level.<sup>1</sup> In most cases the second method will be the only practicable one, as most literary scholars lack any formal medical education, and very few people with the necessary professional training have sufficient time and interest to apply their minds to speculative diagnosis of fictional characters. With Raabe, however, we are in the fortunate position of being able to compare the value of both methods, as at least one full-scale study of Raabe's portrayal of mental abnormality has been made: Maria Vogel's doctoral dissertation<sup>2</sup> examines about seventy characters, divides them where possible into different medical categories, and comments on the accuracy (or inaccuracy, as the case may be) of the symptoms and behavioural patterns which Raabe establishes. Apart from a few tentative observations, Vogel makes no attempt at literary evaluation, nor does she consider the wider implications suggested by the objects of her study; her attention is fixed - justifiably within

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1 In her medically based study, Maria Vogel states that some degree of medical knowledge is obvious in Raabe's work: "Nicht immer kann dem Werk eines Dichters mit dem Maßstab medizinischer Diagnosen nachgespürt werden, doch ist in Raabes Werk das medizinische Wissen unverkennbar, und viele der Gestalten verdienen auch das größere Interesse des Psychiaters." (Vogel, op.cit., p.46). Despite this informed impression, however, we have no evidence that Raabe ever undertook any systematic medical study; the records of his university studies in Berlin certainly make no reference to classes in the medical faculty. Where his characterisation does correspond closely to the recognised pattern of a particular condition, I think it is reasonable to ascribe such correspondence simply to clear though untutored observation on Raabe's part. In any event, as we shall see presently, his most significant portrayals of mental abnormality have many features which could not co-exist in real life.

2 See p.88 of this study, Note 8.



the context of a medical dissertation - on the individual "cases" and the diagnostic problems they present.<sup>3</sup> I think that anyone who has read the whole of her study must conclude that despite its undoubted medical reliability, it is, apart from some residual indirect relevance, virtually valueless in terms of literary interpretation. The very fact that she mentions seventy characters who can be "classified in psychiatric terms" demonstrates just how little affinity exists between the categories of the medical specialist and those of the literary scholar:<sup>4</sup> it may well be true that all seventy of the characters concerned can properly be allocated to one or other of the conditions described, but it must also be perfectly obvious to anyone even generally familiar with Raabe's work that the author himself wished only a very small proportion of that number to be regarded as anything more than slightly eccentric.<sup>5</sup> A medical

3 Where Vogel does bring in considerations of a more literary or critical nature, she often lapses into non-sequiturs and unsubstantiated generalisations. Typical of these are the following, which seem to have been taken over uncritically from the older tradition of Raabe-criticism: "Im Orient gilt der Verrückte als geweiht, und auch Raabe hat für den Verrückten eine beinahe ehrfürchtige Sympathie." (p.12) and: "Melancholien hat Raabe gern und oft und mit besonderer Liebe beschrieben. Er kennt sie wohl aus eigenem Erleben." (p.34). Vogel also mentions two earlier studies, by Dr. Otto Mönkenmüller ("Narren und Toren in Satire, Sprichwort und Humor") and by a certain Dr. Bökelmann ("Psychiatrisches bei Wilhelm Raabe", in the Psychiatrisch-neurologische Wochenschrift). I have not been able to trace either of these studies and cannot comment on their literary value.

4 cf. Vogel, op.cit., p.12: ".....neben dieser großen Schar im Grunde Gesunder findet sich eine große Zahl Raabescher Gestalten, die psychiatrisch einzuordnen sind, teils als Psychotische, teils als Psychopathen."

5 In this regard it is perhaps noteworthy that Stanley Radcliffe's study deals in some detail with around sixty characters who he suggests can be legitimately classified as eccentric. This figure (which includes many cases also examined by Vogel), is significantly close to her own total of around seventy.

investigation such as Vogel's is all very well within its own terms, but by virtue of these terms it must ignore the very questions the literary scholar has to ask and, if too much attention is paid to it, it may even make the answering of these questions more difficult than they would otherwise have been: whereas the psychiatrist is interested in the most probable diagnosis, and in the accuracy or inaccuracy of the presentation, the interest of the literary scholar leads him in quite another direction. He is interested only marginally in verifiable medical accuracy and is concerned to a much greater degree with the wider significance of a character within the novel or story as a whole and with the author's over-all intentions in the work in question.<sup>6</sup> Thus we are left to conclude that a medically based investigation will in the nature of things contribute very little to an understanding of what lies behind an author's presentation of mental abnormality.

We are, then, faced with the second method of approach: an entirely lay, literary enquiry. This too is not without difficulties. How, for example, are we to say which characters are

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6 Vogel herself realises this clearly and expresses the difference in approach in her discussion of the characterisation of Paul Ferrari and Joseph Sonntag. Of the former she states: "Wahrscheinlich hat Raabe ... hier die Schizophrenie gemeint, aber keine deutliche Schizophrenie geschildert, weil er ja Persönlichkeiten, keine Defektzustände für seine Werke braucht. ... Die zerstörte, leere Persönlichkeit paßte schlecht in die Blutwärme seiner Erzählungen." (op.cit., p.17; whether the last phrase is appropriate is, however, to say the least, open to question). Of Sonntag, she states: "Auch hier kommt einem der Gedanke, daß Raabe vielleicht einen Schizophrenen schildern wollte, vielleicht einen Hebephrenen. Aber wichtiger als medizinische Beschreibungen sind Raabe die Schilderungen psychologischer Besonderheiten, und deshalb wird der Kranke nicht so leer, so zerstört geschildert, wie es realistisch wäre." (op.cit., p.34) The same train of thought appears in her general conclusion, though in a more extended form. (op.cit., p.46)



to be regarded as insane and which as merely eccentric, now that we have abandoned all strict medical standards of judgment? How can we assert, in any given instance, what the author's intention must have been? This question cannot always be answered finally and confidently, but we do have some guidelines at our disposal - characterisation, authorial guidance (in some cases), and a general feeling for what a novel is about - and may therefore lay down some general criteria. In the case of Raabe, the following may prove useful as a tentative definition of the concept of mental abnormality as envisaged and presented by the author for his own purposes: we are concerned here with a group of individuals whose conception of their situation and whose relationship to other people are, from any commonly accepted standpoint, abnormal, but who do not possess the creative talents of the imaginative outsiders discussed earlier.<sup>7</sup>

If we accept this definition as a general guideline, we find that, as I indicated above, the phenomenon of mental abnormality is treated in relatively few of Raabe's works. Stretching it to its widest interpretation, we can hardly list more than about eight novels and short stories where it has any significant part to play. It appears, in one form or another, in Ein Frühling, (1857), Der heilige Born (1860), Holunderblüte (1863), Die Hämelschen Kinder (1863), Else von der Tanne (1864), Im Siegeskranze (1866), Deutscher Mondschein (1872) and Altershausen (1902). The most obvious feature of this list is that with the isolated exception of Altershausen, all the works included fall either into the formative

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7 See Chapter II, 2 of this study.

or the middle period of Raabe's literary career; apart from Altershausen itself, there is not one which belongs to the period of his most mature composition. That in itself is an indication that mental abnormality was not a subject which held lasting significance for him, but while this is certainly true, I feel that the subject should nevertheless be mentioned, at least at this stage, if only by virtue of the light it sheds on other more important aspects of Raabe's work. In what follows, therefore, I wish simply to indicate some recurring features of Raabe's approach to mental abnormality, and to suggest possible wider implications affecting his work as a whole.

Even the brief collection of titles listed above can, and indeed should be divided further into two groups. Strictly speaking, the first five works fall into a particular pattern which sets them apart from the three others; in the earlier works, Raabe's conception of mental abnormality seems to be limited to that of a temporary passion, emanating either from within the individual himself or from some external agency, and holding him prisoner for a limited period of time. In all of these cases, Raabe's treatment of the subject seems highly derivative and somewhat lacking in conviction, so that the reader is left with the impression that he is dealing with something essentially trivial, even unreal. The element of mental abnormality seems in some way to have been clumsily grafted on to the corpus of the whole, presumably in order to heighten the reader's emotional reaction, but it neither contributes anything significant in itself, nor does it throw light on other aspects of the works in question. The shallow melodrama of these very early works deprives them of any significance or even credibility which they might otherwise have had, and forces us to



pass them over in favour of an examination of the three remaining works listed above.

The first work to deal in a serious and reflective manner with the problem of mental abnormality is the Novelle Im Siegeskranze (1866). Whatever aspects of this work might be open to question, there can be no doubt that here Raabe intended to portray the fate of someone who can be judged objectively as insane. No doubt certain elements of Raabe's presentation are, as Vogel points out,<sup>8</sup> medically unsound, but the story has nevertheless many of the allegedly classical features of madness as they suggest themselves to the layman: Raabe accentuates time and again the sudden reactive change which overcomes Ludowike on hearing of Kupfermann's execution; in addition the narrator stresses constantly the subsequent contrast between Ludowike and the rest of the family; and finally, the progressive deterioration in Ludowike's condition is emphasised at various stages in the narrative; even such an evidently impossible feature as Ludowike's return to rationality in the last hours of her life serves, in the mind of the average

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8 Vogel, op.cit., pp.29-30: „So trefflich hier auch die medizingeschichtliche Betrachtung über den Wandel der Irrenpflege ist - das kleine Werk läßt keine psychiatrische Deutung zu. Obgleich wir wissen, daß u.a. eine Epileptische die Vorlage der Ludovike (sic!) war, so lassen sich keine typischen Hinweise hierfür finden. Die stumpfe oder negativistische Unzulänglichkeit könnte sowohl eine Katotonie, aber auch eine Idiotie darstellen. Durch die seelische Erschütterung kann beides nicht entstanden sein.

Jedenfalls ist der Siegeskranz keine psychiatrisch verwertbare Schilderung, bringt keine bemerkenswerten Einzelhinweise, sondern nur die sehr allgemeine Darstellung, wie sich Laien Geisteskranke vorstellen, teils wie Kinder, teils schon fast wie Tiere. Laienhaft ist auch der reaktive Beginn und die Aufhellung vor dem Tode."

medically unqualified reader, as a further reminder of the radical mental and physical separation to which she had been subject up to that point.

Raabe's portrayal of Ludowike herself is, then, essentially conventional; he has nothing original, or even particularly interesting to say concerning her condition, and it is perhaps partly for that reason that the tragedy of her fate is not conveyed with quite the degree of force that we might have expected him to bring to bear on it. Nevertheless, I do not think that the comparative lack of intensity in the portrayal of Ludowike's fate should be regarded purely as the result of a failing in inventiveness or originality on Raabe's part; rather it seems to me that he simply did not want to focus the reader's attention exclusively on the character of Ludowike. She is, of course, a figure of great importance, but the interest of the *Novelle* as a whole is built up and maintained not by concentration on one figure, however significant, but by the establishment of a series of partly connected contrasts, each of which contributes something to the general impression the reader is left with at the end of the book. Four main contrasts are established in the course of the *Novelle*: firstly, we cannot but compare Ludowike as she was before the execution with the person she becomes afterwards; secondly, the narrator regularly reminds us of her own isolated position as a sensitive young girl surrounded by a family of apparently unfeeling adults; thirdly, the contrasting attitudes and conditions of life of the "present" (1866) and of the setting of the story itself (1813-14) are made plain in many places; and lastly, a most important contrast is established between the relationship of the



family to Ludowike before the onset of her illness and their attitude to her thereafter. This fourth concern is absolutely central and is worked out primarily through the narrator's position as intermediary between the family and Ludowike. When she relates the sad events of her childhood, she recalls a situation where a family has suddenly split in three directions as a result of the illness of one of its members. Whereas before the onset of Ludowike's mental disturbance the narrator had enjoyed the comfort and security of a well integrated family unit and had felt herself part of a larger unified whole, she recalls with lasting horror the situation forced upon her later, when, after the rejection of Ludowike by the family, she finds herself somewhere between the two, able, indeed compelled to draw together to herself the two opposed worlds of introspective reason and uncomprehending madness, only to find that the tension between them is too great and that they cannot co-exist even within the confines of her own powerful filial affections. This contrast - incorporated in the family's changed attitude towards Ludowike - is, I feel, intended to be more significant than the fact of her condition or the depiction of its development, and there is no doubt that this aspect of the *Novelle* is worked out much more powerfully than the sections devoted mainly to Ludowike herself. The gradual but irreversible and ultimately complete rejection of Ludowike by the family is in a sense more important than the agent

which precipitates it: her illness itself.<sup>9</sup>

What implications does this realisation hold concerning Raabe's underlying purpose in writing Im Siegeskranze? I think one particular conclusion emerges most strongly: in this Novelle, Raabe may well be interested to some extent in the nature of mental illness, but he is concerned in the first instance not with mental illness in itself but with the reaction it evokes among normal, sane people, and with their attitude to the mentally ill. He is interested less in the relationship of the mentally abnormal to the

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9 This contrast is worked out in particularly powerful fashion when the narrator recalls her own situation after Ludowike's first attempt to escape, and describes the almost complete transformation in family relationships that had occurred in the preceding months: „Nun saß ich wieder unter den Vernünftigen und Verständigen und hörte in dumpfer Gleichgültigkeit ihren klugen Reden, ihren Späßen und ihrem Gezänk zu und begriff fast nichts mehr von ihrem Leben; denn alles, was man sagte und tat, war mir gleich dem Kratzen an einer Kalkwand. Aber das begriff ich klar, daß man die Ludowike schier zu den Toten rechnete und daß ein jeder jeden Gedanken an sie so hastig als möglich aus seinem Sinne zu verscheuchen bemüht war und daß man stillschweigend ein Übereinkommen getroffen hatte, die dunkle, kalte Kammer, in welcher sie gefangen saß, so wenig es sein konnte, unter sich und gar nicht gegen andere zu erwähnen. So war denn die Schwester rein eine Lebendigbegrabene geworden; ....Ich fürchtete mich vor ihrem Lachen fast noch mehr, als ich mich vor dem der Irrsinnigen gefürchtet hatte, und als sie nach Neujahr, um den Übergang der verbündeten Heere über den Rhein zu feiern, zum Tanz auf das Rathaus gingen, als ob alles im Haus und im Herzen in der schönsten Ordnung sei, da hab ich mich die Bodentreppe hinaufgeschlichen und saß nieder auf der letzten Stufe vor der verschlossenen Türe der armen Verlassenen und saß da im tiefsten Gram." (B.A. 9/2/242). In this one passage are expressed not only the complete hopelessness of Ludowike's condition but also the embarrassed and hypocritical silence of the family, and the frightened bewilderment of the narrator, caught between the two equally introverted worlds of respectable reason and shameful madness, and helpless to do anything to relieve the situation. The contrast with the previously homogeneous family unit is unmistakable. cf. Joseph Kunz: „Die Novellenkunst Raabes. Dargestellt an seiner Novelle Im Siegeskranze." (in the Jahrbuch der Raabe-Gesellschaft, 1964, pp.106-121), where a similar point is made in a different context (pp.110-111).



outside world and in their view of it than in the relationship of the outside world to the mentally abnormal; it is society, not the insane, which is at the centre of his concern. In other words, he is interested in mental illness not for its own sake or from a descriptive point of view but within a social context. What we have here is, in fact, an examination of mental illness used first and foremost as a vehicle for social criticism.

When we look at the otherwise almost entirely dissimilar sketch Deutscher Mondschein (1872), the same pattern seems to recur. Once again, despite the fact that, according to Vogel, the case is incapable of medical diagnosis (this time owing to the predominance of farcical elements in the plot),<sup>10</sup> there can be no doubt that Raabe fully intended to portray someone suffering from an obsessive delusion, a condition which the man in the street, especially at the time the sketch was written, might well have considered to fall within the category of insanity. Secondly, again in a manner reminiscent of Im Siegeskranze (1866), Raabe's interest is concentrated not so much on the condition of Löhnefinke himself but on the reasons for its emergence, and on the wider implications involved. Thirdly, this implied social comment is again expressed for the most part through the experiences and reactions of a narrator who in this case, although initially an unquestioning member of normal society, eventually finds himself somewhat detached from his original position, and is persuaded to give at least some credence to the claims of the outsider.

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<sup>10</sup> Vogel, op.cit., p.46: „Das Ganze ist zu sehr ein Schwank, als daß man mit medizinischen Diagnosen, wie etwa Hypochondrie, etwas anfangen könnte.“

I think that the narrator's emerging attitude to Löhnefinke can be fairly characterised as a general progression towards trust and fellow-feeling, interrupted every so often by spasms of doubt occasioned by the latter's admittedly bizarre behaviour. At the outset, when Löhnefinke confides in him that he is being "pursued" by the moon, his unspoken reaction is as certain as it is understandable: „Es war mir klar, juristisch klar, daß ich einen Wahnsinnigen vor mir hatte,...“ He feels confirmed in this suspicion by what he takes to be Löhnefinke's fraudulent assertion of identity, but when Löhnefinke finally convinces him of the truth of this assertion, he is thrown into confusion and is momentarily uncertain whether it is in fact not Löhnefinke but himself who is insane - „War das ein Traum, oder war's Wirklichkeit? War dieser Mensch verrückt, oder war ich es?“ Indeed, shortly afterwards Löhnefinke is presented as „der Kollege, der sich seiner ersten Exaltation zum Trotz mir nunmehr als ein höchst klarer Kopf und scharfer Jurist ausgewiesen hatte,...“ But immediately thereafter the narrator is once again thrown into confusion when Löhnefinke's delusion comes to the surface once more. Nevertheless, in the course of a prolonged conversation during which Löhnefinke explains the origins of his peculiar fixation, the narrator appears finally to accept the inevitability, perhaps even desirability of such behaviour in the present context. He recalls his answer to Löhnefinke's question: „Verstehen Sie mich und meine Stellung zu dem Monde, dem deutschen Monde?“ - „Vollkommen!“ sagte ich nach einigem Nachdenken.”<sup>11</sup>

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11 B.A. 9/2/385, 386, 387 and 395.



It seems to me rather a minor point whether the narrator has come to believe in what Löhnefinke says about the moon or, as seems much more likely, he has simply come to accept that Löhnefinke in some way needs to foster this particular delusion, that it plays some positive role in his confrontation with the world at large. I believe that what is important concerning both the narrator's attitude to Löhnefinke and the story as a whole, are the wider social implications. This point of view is based on two main considerations: the significance of the narrator, and Löhnefinke's explanation of the sources of his conduct.

Raabe's frequent use of first-person narrators, especially in the later stages of his creative activity, has been the subject of exhaustive and often enlightening studies,<sup>12</sup> and there is no need to labour the point at this stage. It is, however, important, when considering the relationship of the narrator to Löhnefinke, to note that almost without exception, both at the time of the events described and at the time of writing, the narrator presents himself, sometimes intentionally, sometimes unwittingly, as an exemplary, contented member of normal society, accepting the moral and social standards of the community at large, and submitting to them without question or complaint. This is nowhere more obvious than in the opening paragraph, where he is at pains to establish his own "normality", and determines to relate the events in question in as orderly and dispassionate a manner as possible:

Erzählen wir ruhig und ohne alle Aufregung. Ich bin

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12 See, for example, Helmers: Die bildenden Mächte... and "Die Figur des Erzählers..."; also Eduard Klopfenstein: Erzähler und Leser bei Wilhelm Raabe. Untersuchungen zu einem Formelement der Prosaerzählung., Bern, 1969.

ein selbst für Deutschland außergewöhnlich nüchterner Mensch und verstehe es, meine fünf Sinne zusammenzuhalten. Außerdem bin ich Jurist, der Mann meiner Frau und der Vater meiner Söhne. Weder zur Zeit der Holunderblüte noch zur Zeit der Stockrosen, Sonnenblumen und Asters pflege ich mich sentimental oder romantischen Anwendungen ausgesetzt zu fühlen. Ein Tagebuch führe ich nicht; aber sämtliche Jahrgänge meines Terminkalenders halten in meiner Bibliothek wohlgeordnet ihren Platz fest. Dieses alles vorausgeschickt, teile ich mit, daß ich mich im Jahre 1867 auf ärztlichen Rat, der Seeluft und des Meerwassers wegen, auf der Insel Sylt befand und daß ich daselbst eine Bekanntschaft machte - eine ganz außerordentliche Bekanntschaft.<sup>13</sup>

Here this aspect of his self-characterisation is for the most part clearly intentional; the depth and intensity of his social conformity are, however, more convincingly though less directly rendered by small points of style which arise with particular regularity and which, unwittingly as far as he is concerned, betray clearly the narrator's own outlook and cast of mind. Again and again we come across formulations which reveal a man of brisk, businesslike character (as in his twofold repetition of "gut..."), of pedantic precision ("Ich sagte: die Sonne war untergegangen, und verbessere mich. Sie ging eben unter, als ich bei den Dünen südlich von Wenningstedt, dem Riesenloch gegenüber, anlangte."), or of hidebound legalistic modes of thought and expression ("....es war Abend geworden, und es war gegründete Aussicht vorhanden, daß es demnächst Nacht werde."; "dieses unschädliche Beleuchtungs-institut" (= the moon); "den fraglichen Körperteil" (= Löhnefinke's head)).<sup>14</sup> It would be an easy matter to furnish many other similar

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13 B.A. 9/2/381. cf. also B.A. 9/2/383-84: "der geehrte Leser erlaube mir, daß ich mein Protokoll mit gewohnter Ruhe und ohne Aufregung weiterführe."

14 B.A. 9/2/382, 383,



examples of unwitting self-characterisation, and while it would be wrong to regard the narrator as an essentially negative or unsympathetic character - for on occasions he does display redeeming flashes of humour, and even of self-irony<sup>15</sup> - there is no doubt that he is to be seen basically as a rather unimaginative personality who conforms comfortably to the standards of behaviour expected by the society of his time and situation. He is, I suggest, not only happy in the society to which he belongs, but also representative of it.

In view of this, the narrator's outlook and development take on a new significance; it now becomes necessary to look on his meeting with Löhnefinke not simply as a chance personal encounter between two individuals but as a confrontation between the normal and the abnormal, the conformist and the eccentric, the social and the asocial, and it is all the more noteworthy that in the context of this confrontation, the reader's attention is focussed - after the initial interest of Löhnefinke's odd fixation has worn off - almost entirely on the narrator, the representative of the conformist approach to life. As the work progresses, we become more and more interested in his developing reactions, while Löhnefinke, who shows no such development in outlook, falls away as an independent

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15 The dry humour of the following two passages is representative of this aspect of the narrator's style: "(L8): „Sie wissen, was wir unter dem Worte ‚altliberal‘ verstehen?“ / Ich nickte mit der Energie einer chinesischen Pagode:" (B.A. 9/2/392) and: „Löhnefinke der Poet in seiner Familie! Ich trat mehrere Schritte zurück. Obgleich der tolle Mensch klar wie die Insel Sylt im deutschen Mondenschein vor mir lag, frappte mich das Wort doch. Es war wie der Kanonenknall, der einen auch frappt, trotzdem daß man mit der Lorgnette vor den Augen beobachtete, wie der Kanonier die Lunte anblies." (B.A. 9/2/398)

force.<sup>16</sup> This seems to indicate that Raabe's concern lies primarily with society and its effect upon the individual, and not with the eccentric outsider himself.

This conclusion is supported by a second element, which might seem at first sight to contradict it: Löhnefinke's explanation of the source of his fixation. This long and sometimes rather ludicrous tirade functions less as a piece of self-characterisation than as an implied criticism of society and social values. Even on the purely subjective level, Löhnefinke is at least partially aware of this: he attributes his present "persecution" by the moon to his own - as he now sees it - excessive moral and social conformity in the days of his youth, and regards his present situation as a punishment for the soulless conformity practised not only by himself as a young man but also by many generations of his Prussian legal forebears:

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16 It is true that Löhnefinke's behaviour changes after the arrival of his wife and daughter, who both serve as extreme examples of dogmatic conventionality. (After that point, all talk of poetry and the moon ceases as far as he is concerned). This seems, however, only to involve a temporary suppression of the "poetic" side of his nature, and not in any sense to represent a true development or progression. By the end of the story he has only a passive or reflective interest; he does not represent a radical alternative to conformism in the way that, for example, Velten Andres and Heinrich Schaumann do. By contrast, the development in the narrator's view of things is further emphasised by the regular repetition of the word "Kollege". In the course of the narrative, (which covers only twenty-one pages in the Braunschweiger Ausgabe) this word appears almost forty times (ten times as an address of the narrator to Löhnefinke, twelve times as an address in the opposite direction, and seventeen times as a circumlocution used by the narrator to refer to Löhnefinke in the third person). In the early stages it serves to emphasise the absurdity of the "present" situation and in a way to widen the gap between the narrator and Löhnefinke (whose odd behaviour it accentuates all the more by the contrast it suggests with his daytime professional position); later on, however, it comes to be taken more at face value, reflecting the narrator's growing realisation that he and Löhnefinke have more in common than he had at first thought possible.



Ich versichere Sie, weder der Wein noch die Weiber haben es mir in meinen Jünglingstagen angetan. Ich bin nur zu solide gewesen, und bereue es heute in Kummer, Schmerz und im Sylter Badekostüm. O, hätte ich mich doch ausgetobt in den Tagen meiner Jugend! Hätte ich doch meiner Phantasie die Zügel auf den Hals geworfen und die Gefahr, abgeworfen zu werden und das Genick zu brechen, zur rechten Zeit auf mich genommen! Kollega, Kollega, unterdrückte Poesie ist es, welche mich verrückt macht - verrückt weit nach dem vierzigsten Lebensjahre. Der deutsche Mondschein rächt sich an mir, und ich bezweifle, daß mir irgendein Bad, Sauer- oder Bitterwasser helfen werde.<sup>17</sup>

As far as Löhnefinke himself is concerned we may, of course, regard the whole of this "explanation" as an absurd fantasy, exemplifying further his own personal eccentricity; indeed, it would be easy to denigrate its importance by pointing out that Löhnefinke is, after all, rather unreliable as a commentator on the affairs of the world, even as they affect him personally, but its significance is by no means exhausted on the purely personal level. Its true importance is, in fact, not fully realised until we go beyond the figure of Löhnefinke himself, disregard the absurdity and caricature attaching to him personally, and ask ourselves what Raabe wants to imply through the creation of such a character. When we do this, we are once again led away from the figure of the outsider and drawn persistently towards a consideration of the wider social unit, for, as I suggested earlier, the figure of Löhnefinke does not develop in the same way as that of the narrator; he is essentially passive, and

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17 B.A. 9/2/391. Compare this passage, taken from a later stage in the conversation: "Aber der Mond - ich muß Sie immer von neuem auf diesen herrlichen Mond aufmerksam machen! Ja, ich bin in seinen Banden und werde darin bleiben müssen, bis der Tod mich erlöst. Kollege, durch ihn und mit Beihilfe der gegenwärtigen Zeit und der Weltlage bin ich - der Poet in meiner Familie geworden." (B.A. 9/2/398) Similar sentiments are expressed by Löhnefinke in different form on B.A. 9/2/392 and 393.

any activity attributable to him can usually be explained not in terms of autonomous development but of reaction to outside forces. Thus, in seeking a general explanation for his present condition, we have to take into account the predominant forces acting upon him, and these must of necessity include the force of social convention.

It seems to me that in order to achieve a satisfactory assessment of Löhnefinke's significance we need do no more than reframe his original "explanation" in wider, less personal terms: Löhnefinke sees his fixation with the moon as a punishment for his own unyielding conformity and that of his forebears. What does this mean in wider terms? At once we have to ask what the effects of such conformity might be, and here Löhnefinke's own "explanation" is immediately helpful. He tells the narrator: "....unterdrückte Poesie ist es, welche mich verrückt macht...."<sup>18</sup> Surely here is an indication that the sort of social conformity Löhnefinke is speaking about inevitably entails a suppression of part of the human make-up: in return for the goodwill and protection of the majority community, the individual must renounce any ~~claim to~~ personal, far less imaginative self-expression. Of course, excessive allegiance to the values of society entails a certain restriction on the full development of the individual personality, and while this can make for fruitful tension in a situation where the claims of the community and the self-expression of the individual are well balanced, it is suggested in Deutscher Mondschein that such an ideal situation does not always exist; all too often one element or the other will gain the upper hand. In the case of Löhnefinke who, just as the narrator, is representative of a particular cast of mind, submission to the

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18 B.A. 9/2/391.



demands of society has stunted the growth of more subjective, idiosyncratic elements in his personality. In the long run, however, these inevitably come to the surface and find expression in his otherwise seemingly inexplicable and irrational fixation about the moon. He is, however, still predominantly influenced by considerations of social standing and reputation, as can be inferred from the fact that he allows this psychological safety-valve to operate only under cover of darkness, at night time, after his professional duties are over for the day and the claims of society seem rather less valid and pressing.<sup>19</sup>

Löhnefinke's function is, then, not that of an independent central figure but of a rather passive instrument of social criticism; his story reveals the constricting nature of a social allegiance which forces people of a certain cast of mind to seek an outlet such as his. In the same way as with the narrator (though obviously from a different point of view), Raabe has created Löhnefinke first and foremost not as an autonomous character, generating interest in his own right, but as a vehicle for a critical and sceptical portrayal of social values. As in Im Siegeskranze (1866), so also in Deutscher Mondschein (1872), it is normal society, not the apparently abnormal outsider, which occupies his

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<sup>19</sup> In this context the fact that Löhnefinke suddenly breaks off the conversation on the arrival of his wife and daughter is doubly significant. (See p.365 of this study, Note 16).

main field of interest;<sup>20</sup> although first impressions might indicate otherwise, mental abnormality is not, even in these two works, vital to Raabe's central preoccupations, which, at this point at least, are basically concerned with the nature of society itself.

Deutscher Mondschein represents the last occasion on which the portrayal of mental abnormality occupies a noticeable position in a work published during Raabe's lifetime, but it is not quite the last occasion on which he concerned himself with the subject: in the abandoned fragment Altershausen (1902), so far as we know the last piece of narrative prose written by Raabe, the mentally arrested Ludchen Bock plays a particularly intriguing role. As I have already looked at this novel in some detail,<sup>21</sup> I want at this point simply to isolate the pattern of Raabe's involvement with the phenomenon of mental abnormality as it emerges there, and then to go on to suggest some general conclusions concerning its significance for his work as a whole.

Once again a similar pattern to the one I attempted to demonstrate with regard to Im Siegeskranze (1866) and Deutscher Mondschein (1872) can be traced: Ludchen is without doubt an

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20 It is also noteworthy that the narrator's final thoughts centre not on Löhnefinke at all but on his own son who, we are told, is a student of mathematics at Göttingen (in all probability, therefore, someone for whom the supremacy of reason over intuition is unquestioned). His changing attitude to the claims of society is reflected in the final sentence of the narrative: ".....ich ... kam gegen Mitternacht zu dem Entschluß, meinem augenblicklich in Göttingen Mathematik studierenden Jungen ein Exemplar von Jean Paul Friedrich Richters sämtlichen Werken zu seinem nächsten Geburtstage zu schenken." (B.A. 9/2/402).

21 See Chapter II, 3 of this Study.



important figure, but the novel does not revolve primarily around him or his condition; rather Raabe has created this character in order to throw light on another, quite separate aspect of life. As I mentioned earlier, Altershausen is dominated by two main themes - the problem of the thinking individual's attitude to the materialist society in which he lives, and the general question of change and transience;<sup>22</sup> it is the function of Ludchen to illustrate these themes through the contrast of his world with that of Feyerabend and through the effect on Feyerabend of their eventual reunion. In this respect, the arguments as to whether he is to be regarded in a positive or a negative light, that is to say, whether Raabe is presenting him as an example or a warning, are of no consequence. Whichever view is taken, it is clear that Ludchen's role does not extend beyond that of a passive object of Feyerabend's consideration, unwittingly stimulating him to reflect on his own position and - in the end - to reach certain implied conclusions concerning it.<sup>23</sup> In similar fashion to Deutscher Mondschein, the reader's interest is taken up not with Ludchen (whose condition is portrayed in what we are now perhaps justified in describing as Raabe's typically lay manner),<sup>24</sup> but with

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22 See pp.174-76 of this study.

23 See pp.172-74 of this study, including Notes 36 and 37, and pp.191-93, including Notes 63, 65 and 66.

24 Vogel lists several improbabilities, including the retention of the child's psyche, the lack of any sexual development, and the comparatively late onset of the condition, but concedes that the literary effect is undeniable; she concludes: "So mag man unter Zubilligung erheblicher dichterischer Freiheiten den Fall psychiatrisch gelten lassen." (Vogel, op.cit., p.13)

Feyerabend, the almost archetypal representative of the claims of society.<sup>25</sup> Ludchen is no more an independent force in this novel than Ludowike or Löhnefinke were in the earlier works; here as there Raabe is not interested in the depiction of mental abnormality as a phenomenon in its own right, or even in the context of its effect on the perception of the individual it concerns; in large measure he employs it because it affords him a conveniently indirect but nevertheless penetrating means of examining critically certain aspects and consequences of the way society at large functions. In this his final narrative work, his attention is fixed not on the outsider, the abnormal, but on the conforming, the all too normal, on society itself.

In each of the three works we have looked at, then, a distinct and recurring pattern emerges: Raabe presents us with a figure who is evidently intended to be seen as mentally abnormal, but portrays him in what seems to a medically trained commentator to be a highly uninformed, inaccurate fashion. Although we know that Raabe derived the inspiration for at least one of these characters from a genuine case within his wife's family,<sup>26</sup> none of them is based in any detailed form on actual observation. This alone suggests that he is interested in something other than these conditions as such, and when we turn away from the individuals themselves and look at the works as a whole, this impression is amply confirmed. As we have seen, in each of these works the eccentric or abnormal outsider

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25 See pp.186-88 of this study, and Notes 58 and 59.

26 Details of this source are given by Hans Oppermann in the Appendix to Im Siegeskranze in the Braunschweiger Ausgabe (B.A. 9/2/468-69).



is significant only, or at least particularly, by virtue of his function in illuminating the values and standards of society and - in some cases - in revealing fundamental inadequacies. This aspect is particularly prominent in Deutscher Mondschein (1872) and Altershausen (1902) where, despite the undoubted intention to portray someone obviously abnormal, there comes a point when not only the representative of society - be it the narrator or Feyerabend - but also the reader, must ask whether the normally accepted gap between what is held to be normal and what is held to be abnormal does in fact correspond to the realities of life. At that stage the whole fabric of conventional assumptions which govern our daily intercourse is pointedly called in question. Through the illustration of mental abnormality, Raabe is not just examining these assumptions; he is revealing them in all their misleading inadequacy.

I believe that the pattern I have tried to demonstrate suggests two important conclusions in the context of the totality of Raabe's work. In the first place, Raabe's interest centres to a very considerable degree on contemporary society, on its composition, its values, its shortcomings and its effects upon the individual. This interest in social questions is not all-consuming, as the recurrent concern with the imaginative outsider demonstrates,<sup>27</sup> but it does occupy the centre of attention and represents possibly his most prominent preoccupation. Its central significance is further emphasised by the almost entirely secondary, revelatory role to which, in the works we have been considering, mental abnormality -

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27 See Chapter II, 2, especially pp.137-38.

at first sight the most important aspect - is in each case relegated. There can be little doubt that the shift in emphasis among students of Raabe from a purely individual ethical approach to one which sees him primarily as a critic of contemporary society and culture is basically sound.

The second conclusion which I feel must be drawn from all of this operates to some extent as a qualification though not, I hope, as a refutation of the first. It concerns the possible reasons why, quite apart from the subordinate role it plays when it does appear, Raabe chose to portray mental abnormality on so few occasions. When we attempt to relate the phenomenon of mental abnormality to the other factors making for illusions and misconceptions, that is to say, to those discussed in Section II of this study - factors to which he ascribes much greater importance - we soon become aware of a crucial difference in kind. Most of the misunderstandings, illusions and failures of perception with which we were concerned in Section II are the result of factors which, in varying degrees, it is, at least arguably, within the power of the individual to evade or resist. They are consequent on forces over which he may, under some circumstances, have some control. With mental abnormality, at least from the current lay point of view of the middle and later nineteenth century, the situation is quite different: here the people involved are - with the possible partial exception of Löhnefinke - portrayed as impotent victims of a situation not of their own making. I believe that this important difference highlights a second central feature of Raabe's creativity: if he chooses for the most part to ignore a condition in which the individual plays a purely passive role, preferring to portray him



in at least a situation where he seems to have some degree of autonomy, then I think it must be conceded that he is concerned not simply with representation or social criticism but also with ethical values. Wherever the individual has some freedom of action and development, he inevitably acquires responsibility, and where this is the case, it is impossible to exclude entirely questions of individual ethical and moral decision. For this reason I believe that Raabe's relative lack of concern with mental abnormality, related to his otherwise almost obsessional preoccupation with perception and illusion, supports the opinion that his work has an essentially ethical basis.

Although the two conclusions I have suggested may seem to some extent contradictory, I do not believe that they need necessarily be seen as such. There is nothing incompatible between social criticism and the artistic enunciation of ethical values; indeed, it seems to me that it is easier to combine the two than it is to separate them. Unfortunately, some recent Raabe-criticism seems not to have recognised this fact: in their justifiable eagerness to cast off as thoroughly and completely as possible the old image of Raabe as an artistically clumsy but morally irreproachable preceptor, certain critics, notably Hermann Helmers, have chosen to reject outright any suggestion that Raabe's work might have some ethical, far less didactic basis, and have concentrated their efforts predominantly on establishing a picture of Raabe as a technically skilled writer whose attention was almost exclusively

taken up by social and cultural criticism.<sup>28</sup> As I stated earlier,<sup>29</sup> I believe this shift of emphasis is in itself both sound and necessary, but it also seems to me that it has sometimes been carried too far. Certainly Raabe is largely concerned with social and cultural issues, but just as certainly his work also has an undeniably ethical basis. There is here, I believe, the possibility - and very desirable it would be - of some confluence of the two seemingly irreconcilable traditions of Raabe-criticism; perhaps some further examination of Raabe's portrayal of mental abnormality might make a useful contribution in that direction.

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28 For a summary of Helmers' views on this matter, see Wilhelm Raabe..., especially pp.75-81.

29 See pp.372-3 of this study.



APPENDIX B - FAMILY UNITS IN RAABE'S WORKSA. Incomplete family units

Title	Date of Compo- sition	Character(s)
<b>1. <u>Fatherless families</u></b>		
Die Chronik der Sperlingsgasse	1854-55	Gustav Berg
Die Kinder von Finkenrode	1857-58	Max Büsenberg Cäcilie Willbrand
Wer kann es wenden?	1859	Heinrich Knispel
Der heilige Born	1859-60	Klaus Eckenbrecher
Auf dunkeln Grunde	1860	Meta Wallner
Die Leute aus dem Walde	1861-62	Leon von Poppen
Der Hungerpastor	1862-63	Hans Unwirrsch
Keltische Knochen	1864	Seppl Schönbammer
Abu Telfan	1865-67	Viktor Fehleysen Nikola von Einstein
Der Schüdderump	1867-69	Hennig von Lauen
Christoph Pechlin	1871-72	Christoph Pechlin
Meister Autor	1872-73	Karl Schaaße
Horacker	1875	Cord Horacker
Deutscher Adel	1876-77	Ulrich Schenck
Alte Nester	1877-79	Fritz Langreuter
Der Lar	1887-88	Paul Warnefried Kohl
Die Akten des Vogelsangs	1893-95	Velten Andres
<b>2. <u>Motherless families</u></b>		
Die Kinder von Finkenrode	1857-58	Sidonie Fasterling
Die alte Universität	1858	Ehrhardine Cellarius
Der Junker von Denow	1858	Christoph von Denow
Der heilige Born	1859-60	Monika Fichtner
Auf dunkeln Grunde	1860	Max Illiger
Die schwarze Galeere	1860	Jan Norris Myga van Bergen
Unseres Herrgotts Kanzlei	1861	Regina Lotther
Die Leute aus dem Walde	1861-62	Helene Wienand
Das letzte Recht	1862	Georg Kindler Laurentia Heyliger
Der Hungerpastor	1862-63	Moses Freudenstein
Else von der Tanne	1863-64	Else
Drei Federn	1864-65	August Sonntag
Im Siegeskranze	1866	Narrator
Abu Telfan	1865-67	Serena Reihenschlager
Der Dräumling	1870-71	Wulphilde Mühlenhoff
Meister Autor	1872-73	Gertrud Tofote
Zum wilden Mann	1873	August Mörbling
Eulempfingsten	1874	Elard Nürrenberg Katharina Nebelung

Title	Date of Compo- sition	Character(s)
Frau Salome	1874	Elilike Querian
Die Innerste	1874	Doris Radebrecker
Wunnigel	1876	Anselma Wunnigel
Deutscher Adel	1876-77	Natalie Ferrari
Alte Nester	1877-79	Ewald Sixtus Irene Sixtus Irene von Everstein
Das Horn von Wanza	1879-80	Bernhard Grünhage
Prinzessin Fisch	1881-82	Florine Drüding
Villa Schönow	1882-83	Wittchen Hamelmann
Pfisters Mühle	1883-84	Ebert Pfister Albertine Lippoldes
Stopfkuchen	1888-89	Valentine Quakatz

### 3. Parentless families

Die Chronik der Sperlingsgasse	1854-55	Elise Ralff
Ein Frühling	1856-57	Georg Leiding Eugenie Leiding
Wer kann es wenden?	1859	Rosalie Wolke
Der heilige Born	1859-60	Graf von Spiegelberg and sisters
Unseres Herrgotts Kanzlei	1861	Kläre Trautvetter
Die Leute aus dem Walde	1861-62	Robert Wolf Fritz Wolf Eva Dornbluth
Holunderblüte	1862	Hermann
Der Hungerpastor	1862-63	Franziska Götz
Drei Federn	1864-65	Friedrich Winkler Luise Winkler
Des Reiches Krone	1870	Michel Groland
Zum wilden Mann	1873	Philipp Kristeller Dorette Kristeller
Höxter und Corvey	1873-74	Lambert Tewes Simeath
Der gute Tag	1875	Louise Stieglitz
Horacker	1875	Lottochen Achterhang
Wunnigel	1876	Heinrich Weyland
Alte Nester	1877-79	Just Everstein
Das Horn von Wanza	1879-80	Ludwig Dorsten
Fabian und Sebastian	1880-81	Konstanze Pelzmann
Prinzessin Fisch	1881-82	Theodor Rodburg
Villa Schönow	1882-83	Gerhard Amelung
Pfisters Mühle	1883-84	Adam Asche
Unruhige Gäste	1884	Prudens Hahnemeyer Phöbe Hahnemeyer
Im alten Eisen	1884-86	"Rotkäppchen" Wolf Wermuth Paula Wermuth
Der Lar	1887-88	Rosine Müller
Kloster Lugau	1891-93	Laura Warberg
Hastenbeck	1895-98	"Immeke" von Boffzen



B. Complete family units

Title	Date of Compo- sition	Character(s)
Aus dem Lebensbuch des Schul- meisterleins Michel Haas	1859	Michel Haas
Unseres Herrgotts Kanzlei	1861	Markus Horn
Holunderblüte	1862-63	Jemima Löw
Der Hungerpastor	1862-63	Kleophea Götz
Drei Federn	1864-65	August Hahnenberg Mathilde Sonntag (Frühling) Karoline Sonntag (Spierling)
Sankt Thomas	1861-65	Georg van der Does
Gedelöcke	1865-66	Jens Pedersen Gedelöcke
Abu Telfan	1865-67	Leonhard Hagebucher
Der Schüdderump	1867-69	Franz Buschmann
Des Reiches Krone	1870	Mechthild Groß
Deutscher Mondschein	1872	Friedrich Wilhelm Löhnefinke
Die Innerste	1874	Albrecht Bodenhagen Liese Papenberg
Vom alten Proteus	1875	Hilarion Abwarter
Deutscher Adel	1876-77	Ernesta Piepenschnieder Karl Achtermann Butzemann
Auf dem Altenteil	1878	Family (unnamed)
Das Horn von Wanza	1879-80	Sophie Grünhage
Villa Schönow	1882-83	Wilhelm Schönow
Stopfkuchen	1888-89	Heinrich Schaumann Eduard
Gutmanns Reisen	1890-91	Wilhelm Gutmann
Kloster Lugau	1891-93	Klotilde Blume Eckbert Scriewer
Die Akten des Vogelsangs	1893-95	Eva Kleynkauer Karl Krumhardt
Altershausen	1899-1902	Helene Trotzendorff Ludchen Bock Minchen Ahrens Fritz Feyerabend (as a child)

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